



**Fisherman's son
is new Pinoy Pop
Superstar**

**Japan seeks role
in gov't, MILF
peace negotiations**



**Beatles lose court
battle over Apple
trademark**

**Water board can't stop use
of deep wells in Las Piñas,
Parañaque, Muntinlupa**

Pharmacists to follow docs, nurses in medical exodus

By Christian V. Esguerra

FILIPINO DOCTORS AND NURSES ARE LEAVING, lured by better pay and working conditions abroad. Pretty soon, the Philippines may also begin losing its relatively small number of pharmacists.

Health experts warn of the looming exodus of the country's pharmacists who number no more than 4,000 today.

PHARMACISTS / A7

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Summer's over, here come the rains—Pagasa

By Blanche S. Rivera

WHILE NOT QUITE A storm, tropical depression "Caloy" which blew into the Philippines yesterday effectively ended an unusually scorching summer. However, this is not yet

SUMMER'S / A8



Saudi oil supply assured

GMA flying home with 138 freed Filipinos

By Fe Zamora

JEDDAH, SAUDI ARABIA—President Macapagal-Arroyo said Monday that Saudi Arabia had pledged to supply the Philippines with oil in case of supply disruptions and that King Abdullah had granted a mass pardon to 138 Filipino lawbreakers in the oil-rich kingdom.

In addition, Saudi police announced they were releasing eight other Filipinos held in jails in Jeddah.

"The oil minister of Saudi Arabia has conveyed his assurances to me that in the unlikely event of a disruption in the Philippine oil supply, Saudi Arabia is prepared to make up for the shortage," Ms Arroyo said at the Meridian Hotel after talks with Saudi officials.

The Philippines in 2004 imported 37 million barrels of crude oil from Saudi Arabia, accounting for more than 50 percent of the country's total importation of 73 million barrels that year.

Malacañang had said Ms Arroyo's four-day state visit to the kingdom was a mission for the "three O's," a reference to the oil problem, the welfare of overseas Filipino workers, and the long-standing Philippine request for observer status in the Organization of the Islamic Conference.

Observer status in the OIC is deemed vital in the country's efforts to resolve the decades-old Muslim separatist problem in Mindanao.

Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye described the mass pardon for Filipinos given by Saudi King Abdullah as the "first in the history of Saudi Arabia."

"Eto ang pinakamagandang regalo na maiiwi natin sa Pilipinas," he said.

SAUDI / A7



RIYADH Gov. Prince Salman presents to President Macapagal-Arroyo a book depicting the history of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Behind Ms Arroyo is Foreign Secretary Alberto Romulo.

PCPO-MALACANANG

Chavit vows to leave GMA if Erap walks

By Norman Bordadora

PRESIDENT MACAPAGAL-ARROYO only needs to strike a deal with deposed leader Joseph Estrada for Ilocos Sur Gov. Luis "Chavit" Singson to turn his back on her.

Singson said over dinner at the Inquirer office on Monday that he would go against Ms Arroyo if Estrada were acquitted by the Sandiganbayan of the P4-billion plunder charge leveled against him after his ouster in 2001.

"The case is so strong. The only way he can be acquitted is if there's a deal," the 64-year-old

CHAVIT / A8



THRILLED Filipino workers reach out to shake the President's hand.

PCPO-MALACANANG

Remember your roots, Satur tells ex-comrade Mike D

By Michael Lim Ubac

PRESIDENT MACAPAGAL-ARROYO's chief of staff should look back at his past and steer clear of National Security Adviser Norberto Gonzales, according to militant party-list lawmaker Satur Ocampo.

"Remember your roots," Ocampo said yesterday in taking

a swipe at Michael Defensor, who had earlier offered to help him and the rest of the "Batasan 5" in their legal defense, on condition that they renounced the armed struggle being waged by the Communist Party of the Philippines and its armed wing, the New People's Army.

Ocampo, senior representative of Bayan Muna and House deputy

minority leader, said Defensor's call was "a mere echo" of the statements of the "anti-Left, anti-due-process Bert Gonzales."

He said Defensor should stay away from Gonzales, "who displays his ignorance of the law by reversing the doctrine that one is presumed innocent until proven guilty."

"What's wrong with this govern-

ment is that it lets loose legal nincompoops in the Inter-Agency Legal Action Group, led by the biggest legal ignoramus Bert Gonzales, to manufacture a rebellion case against us," Ocampo said.

But Defensor—who in the 1980s was an active member of the militant youth group Kabataang Makabayan (KM), along with the likes of Nathanael Santiago, now

secretary general of Bayan Muna—said: "In Europe, the communists, socialists and labor have taken the path of parliamentary struggle to pursue their ideology without the armed component. I think the superiority of their arguments should be their weapon, and not guns and bombs."

Defensor also said the commu-

REMEMBER / A8

ENVY / A6

This particular survivor was rescued at 10 a.m. on May 4, a South African radio report said. He was not injured, and had been relatively comfortable overnight in the life raft which was "designed to sustain people," the report said.

ENVY / A6



REP. Crispin Beltran

PCP/PHOTO

Beltran turns 'hyper' as Batasan 5 drop in for a visit

By DJ Yap

YESTERDAY'S VISIT OF THE "Batasan 5" to their unofficial sixth member, Anakpawis Rep. Crispin Beltran, so pleased him that his blood pressure shot up to 160 over 90.

But otherwise, it was a lively meeting of old friends, no matter that it was held under heavy security in Beltran's hospital room

at the Philippine Heart Center in Quezon City.

One topic that stood out in the animated conversation was Justice Secretary Raul Gonzales.

"He's one of the factors that's keeping my blood pressure high. Another one is [President Macapagal] Arroyo," the hypertensive Beltran joked.

The visit to Beltran, 73, was one of the first things that Repre-

sentatives Satur Ocampo, Joel Viador, Teodoro Casiño, Rafael Mariano and Liza Maza did collectively after they left the protective custody of the House of Representatives on Monday.

Wearing "Free Ka Bel" buttons on their shirts and bearing fruits and a pack of uraro, a native pastry, the Batasan 5 arrived at Room 427 at a little past 3 p.m.

The visitors were warned not to

get too close to their colleague because he was taking a type of medication that emitted radiation.

"Free Ka Bel Movement" spokesperson Dennis Maga said Beltran was suffering from a cyst in the right kidney, carotid plaque, which causes blockage in blood flow in the carotid area, and signs of a cardiovascular ailment.

Beltran is being treated with Thallium 201, a drug known to

emit radiation, according to his daughter Olivia Laluis.

The medication will determine his heart's "movement," enabling the doctors to determine the cause of his high blood pressure, she said.

"The radiation warning did not stop Ocampo and Maza from hugging and bussing their colleague on the cheek.

Dressed in a hospital gown, the

BELTRAN / A6

WEATHER FORECAST

FORECAST: Eastern section of Visayas and the whole of Mindanao will experience mostly cloudy skies with scattered rainshowers and thunderstorms. The rest of the country will be partly cloudy to at times cloudy with isolated rainshowers or thunderstorms mostly in the afternoon or evening.

COMPILED BY KARE PEDROSO, FOR RESEARCH/ISSUES/06 SOURCE: PAGASA

Second FRONT PAGE

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Luzon Partly Cloudy
Cebu Partly Cloudy
Davao Partly Cloudy

Palawan Partly Cloudy
Boracay Partly Cloudy
Cebu Partly Cloudy
Davao Partly Cloudy
Zamboanga Partly Cloudy
Cagayan de Oro Partly Cloudy

Surging stocks good, but not for majority of Pinoys, says solon

By Juliet Labog-Javellana

THE STRONG SHOWING OF the Philippine stock market does not mean the economy is good, a senator said yesterday.

Sen. Manuel "Mar" Roxas II, an economist who was dubbed "Mr. Palengke" for the market inspections he conducted during his stint as trade secretary during President Macapagal-Arroyo's first term, lamented the "disconnect" between the stock market figures and the actual state of the economy.

"We can say that the stock market is good but this does not mean that our economy is also strong. Our economy is OK but it's not as good as the stock market figures (appear to show)," the administration senator said in a radio interview.

Everyday life

"There is really a disconnect between what we call the financial market and the real economy, (as reflected) in the everyday life of Juan de la Cruz," Roxas said, referring to the name given to the Filipino everyman.

Roxas was commenting on news reports yesterday that the Philippine stock market had surged to its highest level in seven years.

Foreign investors were reportedly bullish about the bright prospects of the economy, the improving government revenues, the low interest rates and the relative political peace.

"This is good—we do not want to negate this good news—but we need to act so that this will be felt in the everyday life of Juan de la Cruz," Roxas said.

Roxas said some 60 to 70 percent of the investors in the stock market were foreigners who were only looking for markets to "park" their money.

Parking their money

"Those are all foreign funds. They (investors) are just looking for a place to park their money and it just so happens that the Philippines is the flavor of the month. It's good that they are coming to the Philippines and we do not belittle that, but that really does not benefit (the people)," Roxas said.

Ideally, he said, investments in the stock market should rebound to the benefit of the people through the construction of new factories and the establishment of businesses that would create jobs.

"We have not come to that," Roxas said.

He said even local businessmen were feeling the economic crunch.

"If you ask the businessmen here, most of their products are now being sold in sachets or in small portions," Roxas said.

He said the "sachet economy" reflected the hardships being endured by the majority of Filipinos.

He said the escalating oil prices also meant more hardships ahead.

Japan seeks role in gov't, MILF peace negotiations

By Jeffrey Maitem
PDI Mindanao Bureau

COTABATO CITY—JAPAN IS SEEKING AN ACTIVE role in the peace negotiations between the Philippine government and the secessionist Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF).

At least two Japanese diplomats met with MILF leaders on Sunday to signify their government's intention to join the International Monitoring Team (IMT).

The IMT, led by Malaysia, was created by the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) to monitor the ceasefire between the Philippine military and the MILF while peace talks are going on in Kuala Lumpur.

Shigeo Yamada, director of the Second Southeast Asia Division of the Japanese foreign ministry, said he was impressed by the sincerity and commitment of the government and MILF negotiators in the ongoing peace talks.

"The IMT is also doing a great job in sustaining the ceasefire on the ground and touching the lives of the people," Yamada said.

Yamada was accompanied by the meeting with the MILF by Yoshihisa Ishikawa, first secretary of the political section of the Japanese Embassy in Manila. The meeting was held in the MILF satellite office in Simuay, Sultan Kudarat, Maguindanao.

Yamada said he also wanted to find out in what other areas Japan could contribute to advance the peace process.

Ghadzali Jaafar, MILF vice chair for political affairs, said his group welcomed Japan's participation in the peace process.

"We are very grateful to the Japanese government for her great concern in ensuring the peace and stability of our homeland and in Mindanao," Jaafar said.

The 12,000-member separatist MILF is observing a three-year-old ceasefire with Manila. The peace talks have bogged down on land and eminent domain issues but the two sides hope to sign a peace treaty later this year.

President Macapagal-Arroyo had asked foreign donors to pour development aid into Mindanao to help bring peace to the region wracked by decades of sectarian conflict.

Japan is a major provider of official development assistance to the Philippines.

Jaafar said in a statement that Japan's active role in the peace process was "very much welcome" and "has long been desired."

The Yamada visit was "a manifestation of the tremendous concern of your government for the current peace process," he said.

As this developed, a private

company that operates a chain of hospitals in Japan has offered to donate over P3 million worth of medicines to Muslim communities in the conflict areas in Mindanao.

"The donation, consisting of vaccines, antibiotics, injectables, among other medicines, will be used in medical missions in the provinces of Basilan, Davao Oriental, Lanao del Norte, Sultan Kudarat and Zamboanga del Sur," Secretary Jesus Dureza, the presidential peace adviser, said.

Dureza said the medicines would be coursed through the Bangsamoro Development Agency, the designated development arm of the MILF.

He said the Tokushukai Medical Corp. made the donation after Moner Bajunaid of the non-government group, Health Organizational Development and Peace Education, had sought assistance from the company.

Bajunaid was a former member of the MILF peace panel. With an AFP report

RP, Australia close to inking security pact

KUALA LUMPUR—THE PHILIPPINES and Australia will soon sign a security pact allowing Australian troops to be stationed, albeit temporarily, in the Southeast Asian nation, Philippine Defense Secretary Avelino Cruz said here on Tuesday.

Cruz, who is in Malaysia attending a meeting of Southeast Asian defense ministers, said the Philippines hoped to sign similar agreements with other nations in the region to strengthen the battle against terrorism.

"I have talked to most of the defense ministers in Asean and I have broached to them the idea of a status of forces agreement in order that we can conduct joint exercises against terrorism or for disaster response," Cruz told Reuters.

Annual meetings of defense ministers planned by the 10-country Association of Southeast Asian

Nations would be a tremendous boost in helping to hammer out such agreements, he said.

"If Asean were a chariot, the defense ministers' meetings will be an additional stallion to push Asean forward," he added.

"My sense is that all of the defense ministers in Asean will see this as a very logical next step, as a forum for dialogue, a forum for exploring cooperative measures, and the next step towards instituting an Asean security community."

A status of forces agreement (Sofa) with Australia would allow thousands of its troops to participate in annual military exercises with the Philippines and the United States, with whom the Philippines has military agreements.

"With respect to Australia, the negotiating partners have met twice, and I've seen the almost fi-

nal draft and the issues are easily surmountable, and I think probably in a month or so that should be completed and signed and executed," Cruz said.

Canberra, which has shown deep concern over the activities of Islamic militants in the southern Philippines since the 2002 Bali (Indonesia) bombing, already provides training for about 60 Filipino soldiers a year in Australia. A handful of Australian police officers is based in the Philippines to train their local counterparts in bomb-investigation methods.

Cruz said the Philippines hoped to sign similar agreements with Malaysia, Thailand and Indonesia. Defense officials of Brunei had also expressed interest, he said.

"The next step will be, after I send them a formal letter, to constitute negotiating panels for those Asean members who are

keen to enter into a Sofa with the Philippines," he said.

Meanwhile, Cruz said the Philippines will launch a new security pact with the United States on May 24 to jointly fight militants, bird flu, piracy, natural disasters and other threats.

The US, a former colonial ruler of the Philippines, has been a major source of military aid for the latter's armed forces in the form of training and hardware like arms, gunboats and helicopters.

Washington has poured in more than \$300 million in security assistance since 2000.

The two countries had agreed to create a legal framework for cooperation on issues outside a defense treaty that dates to the 1950s, said Cruz, who was President Macapagal-Arroyo's lawyer before she named him defense secretary in August 2004. Reuters

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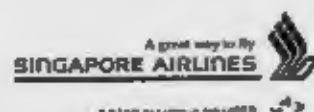
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Alleged Abu arrested

THE MILITARY HAS captured a suspected Abu Sayyaf member accused of involvement in at least six kidnappings in the southern Philippines, an Army official said Tuesday.

Komoni Pael, also known as Abu Bara, was arrested Monday by the 1st Infantry Division in Kumalarang, Basilan, according to Army spokesperson Lt. Col. Bartolome Bacarro.

Two regional courts had issued six warrants for the arrest of Pael, implicated in kidnappings in Basilan and nearby Jolo where Abu Sayyaf rebels maintain hinterland strongholds, Bacarro said in a statement, adding that Pael was being interrogated by the military.

Pael was a follower of Hamsiraji Sali, a prominent Basilan-based Abu Sayyaf commander who was killed in a clash with government troops in April 2004, Bacarro said.

Sali was among five Abu Sayyaf commanders wanted by Washington for their alleged role in the killing of two of three American hostages snatched with several other tourists from the Dos Palmas resort in Palawan in 2001. AFP

Distressed pre-need firm would sell plans

By Alcuin Papa

THE DISTRESSED PRE-NEED firm Pacific Plans Inc. is asking the Securities and Exchange Commission to allow it to sell more educational plans as part of its rehabilitation plan.

But holders of education plans that the company has failed to honor maintain that giving PPI a license to sell more plans is "giving them a license to get more victims."

Alfredo Non, PPI president, told the INQUIRER the company applied for a license to sell education plans last December, months after the SEC suspended a PPI subsidiary's license to sell such plans.

Non said a license to sell was "an important component" of the rehabilitation plan for PPI approved by a Makati court last April. "If there is no license what is there to rehabilitate?"

Pacific Plans suspended sales of its traditional open-ended educational plans in 1992 after tuition rates started to rise. The SEC later suspended sales of such plans by all pre-need firms.

A traditional or open-ended plan pays the cost of a beneficia-

ry's education, regardless of what the cost may be at maturity. A fixed plan guarantees payment of a fixed amount set at the time of purchase.

PPI transferred its license to sell fixed plans to a subsidiary, Lifetime Plans Inc., in 2005, but the SEC later suspended the subsidiary's license and ordered it to return all its assets to the mother company.

"We thought that the rehabilitation would be messy and we wanted to protect some 400,000 fixed plan holders from any fallout," Non said, referring to the earlier decision to transfer the fixed plans to the subsidiary. "But the SEC put all of it back together under PPI."

Hence, PPI applied for a new license to sell more fixed plans, Non said.

But Philip Piccio, president of the Parents Enabling Parents Coalition (PEP Coalition), said the SEC should not grant license to PPI.

"They themselves (SEC) said what Pacific Plans did ... was fraudulent," Piccio said. "How can a government regulator give a license back to a company that they concluded had committed fraud?"

Congress think tank warns on shift to federal system

By Philip C. Tubeza

WHILE THE HOUSE MAJORITY IS going all-out for Charter change, Congress' own think tank has warned against a hasty shift to a federal system of government, saying autonomy does not ensure economic development as demonstrated in Muslim Mindanao.

In a paper titled "Shifting to a Federal Government: Some Issues to Consider," the Congressional Planning and Budget Department (CPBD) said that drawing up state borders, estimating the cost of creating and maintaining state governments, ensuring fiscal sustainability, and developing a fiscal plan to deal with the national debt were major issues that current Cha-cha proposals do not deal with at all.

"The proposed amendments to

the 1987 Constitution deal very little with federalism. They barely give an idea how the country will go about shifting to a federal form of government," the CPBD said.

Meanwhile, the People's Movement Against Charter Change (People's March), a network of lawyers, academics, militants, student organizations and church people, held a motorcade around Makati City yesterday to campaign against amending the Constitution and collect anti-Cha-cha signatures.

"We are bringing the issues to the people... so they would know on which side they should be," said Renato Reyes Jr., spokesperson of Bagong Alyansang Makabayan (Bayan), a militant umbrella organization allied with People's March.

The motorcade of seven vehicles, bearing signs denouncing Cha-cha,

passed through major thoroughfares. The group distributed leaflets containing arguments against Charter change and encouraged pedestrians and office employees to sign an opposition manifesto.

The group brought the caravan to stations of the Metro Rail Transit and the busy Baclaran area in Parañaque and collected some 2,000 signatures in two hours.

In its paper, the congressional think tank noted that the draft constitution prepared by Malacañang's Consultative Commission that now serves as the House's working draft states only that a federal system would be installed within 10 years from the approval of the revised Charter.

"Adding another layer to the existing government setup would bloat the bureaucracy and conse-

quently increase overall spending to support operations. Each federal state would have to maintain their respective executive offices, a separate legislature and a separate judiciary," the CPBD said.

It said it was important to learn from the experience of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao.

"The ARMM may not present the ideal setup but it certainly has been the closest the Philippines has experienced in creating independent territories—a vital requisite if the country were to pursue federalism," the CPBD said.

It pointed out that while the ARMM was authorized to collect taxes and fees, it remained heavily dependent on the national government for its fiscal needs. With Tarra V. Quismundo

Luisita tillers to get one title

By Blanche S. Rivera

THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRARIAN Reform will issue a collective certificate of land ownership award (CLOA) to the first batch of beneficiaries of Hacienda Luisita, which will be parceled out starting next month, the department said yesterday.

Brushing aside the contradicting requests of the Luisita farm workers, Undersecretary Narciso Nieto Jr. said the government was after the immediate transfer of ownership from the Cojuangco family to the qualified farmer beneficiaries.

"It will initially be a collective CLOA just so we can transfer the title from the landowners to the farmers. If we subdivide now, it's going to be a very long process," Nieto told the INQUIRER by phone yesterday.

The Alyansa ng mga Manggagawang Bulid sa Asyenda Luisita (Ambala), which filed the com-

plaint that led to the revocation of the estate's stock distribution scheme, wants a collective CLOA. But another group, the Farm Workers Agrarian Reform Movement (Farm), wants individual titles, claiming Ambala would include only its members in the collective title.

"They should agree... but in the meantime, it will be collective. There is a big difference in the time and expenses if we do individual CLOAs," Nieto said.

He said it would take at least another three months if the DAR issued separate CLOAs because this would require the subdivision of the lots based on the number of beneficiaries and individual tiling.

The DAR is eyeing the distribution of the first 1,000 hectares of the 4,915-ha Hacienda Luisita by June 10 to coincide with the 18th anniversary of the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program.

"Hopefully by the end of year or

early next year, we can complete the distribution of CLOAs for Luisita," Nieto said, adding that 95 percent of the beneficiaries had been identified.

Hacienda Luisita Inc., which manages the sugar estate owned by the Cojuangco family to which former President Corazon Aquino belongs, warned it would bring graft charges against Agrarian Reform Secretary Nasser Pangandaman if he went ahead with the plan to parcel out the estate to its workers.

HLI lawyer and spokesperson Vigor Mendoza said in a statement that the Cojuangco family, the estate's majority owners, had questioned the government's decision revoking the stock distribution option scheme and the case was pending in the Supreme Court.

He accused the government of breaking up the estate to get back at Aquino for demanding President Macapagal-Arroyo's resignation.

Prosecutor quits case

THE LEAD PROSECUTOR IN THE rape case filed by a Filipino woman against four US Marines has resigned, citing a "heavy workload."

Makati City prosecutor Feliciano Aspi resigned last week as head of the five-member panel the Department of Justice formed to prosecute Marine Lance Corporals Keith Silkwood, Dominic Duplantis, Daniel Smith and Staff Sgt. Chad Carpentier.

"I inhibited myself, sort of excused myself from the panel because the cases I'm handling here may just pile up," Aspi told the INQUIRER yesterday. Senior State Prosecutor Emilie Fe de los Santos will replace Aspi as head of the prosecution panel.

Aspi resigned along with Assistant City Prosecutor Christopher Garvida, who excused himself for the same reason. Tarra V. Quismundo

Correction

A STORY on Page A10 of the May 8 issue misstated that the Australian Embassy was holding a job fair in Manila on May 17 and 18. The embassy said it is not a job fair but a Skills Migration Expo whose purpose is to showcase the skills needed in Australia and to give information on Australian skills migration. The embassy will not give job interviews or accept resumes at the expo.

The embassy also said a quotation in the story attributed to Ambassador Tony Hely seemed to imply that life in the Philippines was not free of discrimination. That was not an accurate reflection of the quotation in its press release, the embassy said.

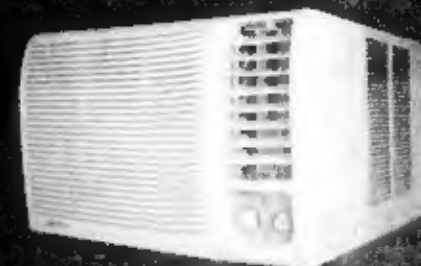
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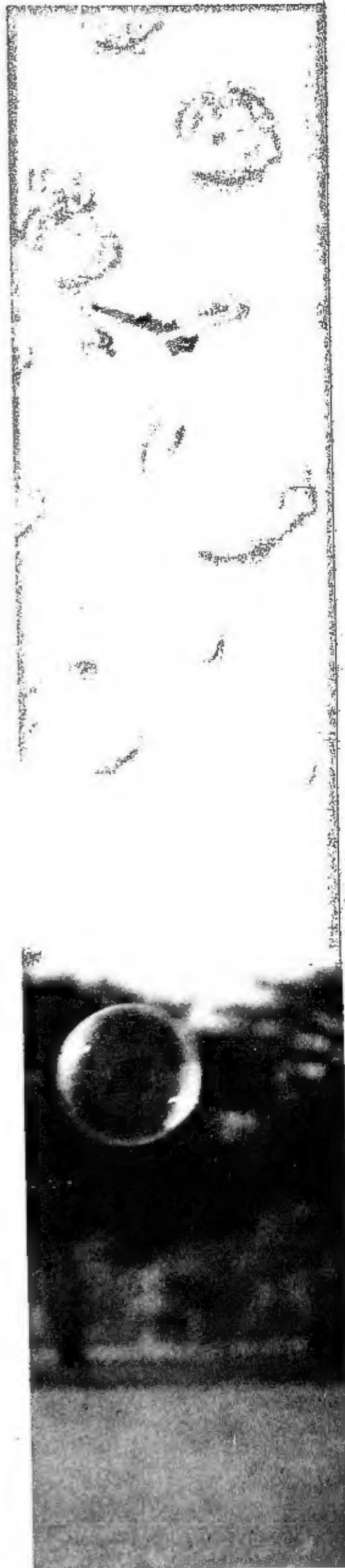
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Envoy tells how 6 Filipino seamen survived

From page A1

It said four other life rafts spotted by rescue aircraft were found to be empty.

Fear of hypothermia

Andre Botes, the head of the South African Maritime Search and Rescue Operations, earlier said that some of those rescued had mentioned that when the crew attempted to abandon the ship, which was fast breaking up after taking on water, some could not reach the life rafts.

The discovery of the empty life rafts had sparked concern that the people in the water might have suffered from hypothermia. Botes said the water temperature could have been between 16 and 18 degrees Celsius when the incident happened.

The six Filipino survivors were taken by the rescue ship Fortune Express to the South African mainland. They were to be ferried to an Air Force Base at Durban by a military helicopter, Reyes said.

The survivors were expected to receive medical treatment as well as psychological counseling there, he said.

Reyes said he was coordinating with the representative of the ship's owners for the Filipino seamen's repatriation to the Philippines, as well as the payment of their outstanding salaries and other benefits.

The six survivors have spoken with their families in the Philippines by satellite phone with the help of Inter-Orient Agency, their recruitment agency, Reyes said.

Yesterday, the Filipino International Seafarers Solidarity Organization (Fisso) called on the

Philippine government to ratify the recently adopted Consolidated Maritime Labor Convention to further assure the health and safety of Filipino seamen.

Maritime conventions

The convention, which was adopted during the International Labor Organization conference in February, put together and updated 68 separate ILO maritime conventions and recommendations that would apply to all commercial ships, except fishing boats and traditional vessels.

Fisso, in a statement, cited the importance of giving more protection to Filipino seamen through CMLC following the sinking of the MV Alexandros T.

"This incident again highlights the vulnerability of Filipino seafarers, who comprise about a quarter of the global maritime labor," the group said.

"MV Alexandros T will certainly not be the last accident to involve Filipino seafarers."

Minimum requirements

The CMLC sets minimum requirements for seafarers to work on a ship and contains provisions on conditions of employment, hours of work and rest, accommodation, recreational facilities, food and catering, health protection, medical care, welfare and social security protection.

Aside from updating existing maritime labor instruments, the CMLC contains new subjects, such as occupational safety and health to meet concerns, such as the effects of noise and vibration on workers. With a report from Jerome Aning



JUST SAY NO

To counter the "people's initiative" for a shift to the parliamentary system, members of militant groups gather signatures against Charter change along Ayala Avenue in Makati. (Story on Page A4.)

BIRTHDAY GIFT IDEAS

Seedlings for Mother Earth

By Tonette Orejas
PDI Central Luzon Desk

CITY OF SAN FERNANDO—Birthdays would no more be just about cakes, new clothes, prayers

and wishes for long life and happiness.

For at least 1,450 personnel of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources in Central Luzon, birthdays would hence

mean gifting oneself with at least 12 seedlings and encouraging kin, friends and colleagues to also give them as gifts.

This new initiative for the environment is called "Birthday Seedlings for Mother Earth (BSME)."

The brains behind it, Dr. Sofio Quintana, the DENR's regional technical director for forestry, launched the project on Monday on the eve of his 50th birthday.

He gifted himself with 12 seedlings of Dau, an indigenous species, and got about 30 fruit seedlings as gifts.

Already three feet high, the trees would go to a nursery at the DENR regional office.

Regidor de Leon, DENR regional executive director, on Monday issued a memorandum directing the seven provincial offices and 16 city offices to adopt the BSME and establish a nursery for the agency-initiated project.

Quintana, who recently assumed the post, came up with the BSME to make up for the lack of funds for seedlings amid rising demand from local governments involved in putting up mini-forests or roadside planting projects.

"We could proceed with these endeavors without relying on government funds," Quintana said.

By themselves, the DENR staff could contribute 17,400 seedlings that would be gathered from their own backyards or right in their communities.

Indigenous species like molave, narra and rain tree would be preferred.

Quintana said the DENR personnel were also fulfilling their "moral obligation" to the environment in redefining birthdays as a thanksgiving to Mother Earth through what he called an "ecological token."

On top of addressing the plunder and degradation of the forests, he said his appreciation for trees began when he worked as a laborer at a forest nursery.

This was how the Marinduque native put himself through college at the Gregorio Araneta University Foundation, now the De La Salle-Araneta University.

The demand for trees in Central Luzon, a major agricultural and industrial area, is immense.

DENR reports showed that of the total 2.1 million hectares in the region, at least 963,120 hectares were forestlands. The potential protection forests cover at least 413,301 hectares.

Efforts to establish forest plantations are going on on a modest scale, with 486 hectares planted in 2004 and 1,658 hectares planted around the Pampanga River Basin in 2005.

De Leon said the regional office organized a team in April to help package reforestation investments in open areas within forest zones.

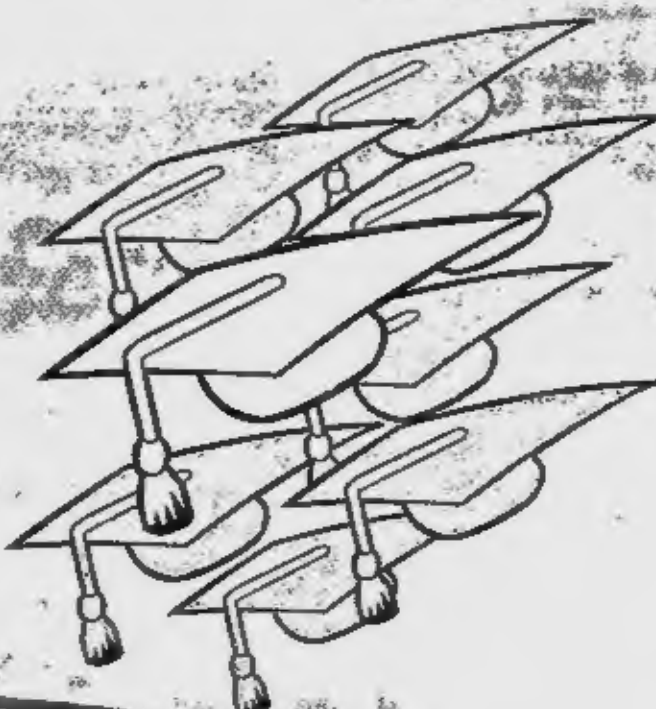
He said investors had lost their enthusiasm for this type of project due to red tape and numerous requirements.

The team, he said, would help speed up the application process.

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'PWEDE NA'

PLDT retail business group senior vice president Butch Jimenez (right) receives the magic wand from PLDT AVP for card services Cristina Balingit signaling the grand launch of PWEDE! card, the country's first reloadable all-in-one pre-paid call and Internet card from telecom giant PLDT-Smart held last weekend at the Republic of Malate. PWEDE! card can be used from any PLDT landline, PLDT and Smarttalk payphones, and Smart and Talk 'N Text cell phones.



HE MAY have been confined in hospital for quite a time now, but Anakpawis Rep. Crispin Beltran is in fine fettle. (See leaflets over his bed.) A nurse checks his blood pressure, which shot up to 160/90 during the visit by Bayan Muna Rep. Satur Ocampo (left) and other members of the "Batasan 5."

Beltran turns 'hyper' during Batasan 5 ...

From page A1

smiling Beltran appeared to be in high spirits as he shook hands with his visitors. A nurse took Beltran's blood pressure, found that it had risen to 160/90, and gave him a pill.

'That's your line'

The meeting was marked by shared notes on political developments.

Beltran recalled how he found himself clapping when Casio boldly said on television that arresting the Batasan 5 would be "politically bloody" for the Arroyo administration.

"Actually, that's your line," Casio said, eliciting laughter from Beltran.

The lawmakers talked about Beltran's arrest in Bulacan on Feb. 25, and how Ocampo et al. narrowly avoided arrest after holding a press conference at the Sulo Hotel in Quezon City on the same day.

Ocampo recounted how he and his colleagues had to negotiate the side streets around the hotel after leaving it through a basement exit.

The six lawmakers also discussed developments in their respective cases. Some commented that the Department of Justice motion seeking the inhibition of Makati Regional Trial Court Judge Jenny Lind Delorino could spell bad news for Beltran, whose rebellion case is being heard in the same court.

Virador said the cases of the six lawmakers were obviously linked to Presidential Proclamation No. 1017, despite government statements to the contrary.

Ms Arroyo issued PP 1017 imposing a week-long state of national emergency on Feb. 24.

In a ruling last week, the Supreme Court declared that certain provisions of PP 1017, including those involving warrantless arrests, were illegal.

Show biz gossip

But apart from political talk, the six lawmakers indulged in show biz gossip.

Out of nowhere, Beltran commented on how Keanna Reeves, winner of the ABS-CBN reality show "Pinoy Big Brother Celebrity Edition," was helping Maza's party-list group, Gabriela, in its advocacy.

"What she has been saying is very positive for Gabriela and the women's movement,"

Beltran said.

Soon, Casio was saying that he had met Reeves' "housemate," Bianca Gonzales, a TV host. "Sila pa rin ba ni (Is she still seeing TV director) Lino Cayetano?" Mariano said, referring to Gonzales' erstwhile boyfriend.

Amid the laughter, one lawmaker was heard saying: "I heard that [TV host] Mariel Rodriguez and [Pinoy Big Brother] housemate] Zanjoe Marudo are now together."

But the topic that kept recurring in the conversation was Justice Secretary Gonzalez.

Ocampo said Gonzalez's temper could be traced to the kidney dialysis he is reportedly undergoing.

"Naaburido na talaga siya, sa akin (The strain is getting to him, especially about me)," Beltran said.

"He reacted quite strongly to [Sen. Panfilo] Lacson's exposé [of his dialysis]," Ocampo said. "Di talaga naman yun isyu (It really isn't an issue)."

Gonzalez has said he underwent dialysis only once a long time ago.

Beltran's case

In Nairobi, Kenya, where he is attending the Inter-Parliamentary Union summit, Senate Minority Leader Aquilino Pimentel Jr. said he had brought the cases of the six lawmakers to the attention of the foreign parliamentarians.

"I just ended argument before IPU human rights committee charging the [Philippine] government with violation of the human rights of the Batasan 5 and Beltran [at 3:30 p.m. Monday, Kenya time]," he said in a text message.

Pimentel, who is attending the summit along with Senate President Franklin Drilon and Senators Richard Gordon and Lacson, said the IPU human rights committee appeared more interested in Beltran's case.

"My impression is that [it] would focus on Beltran's case because he's still in detention," he said.

Ironically, at the April 2005 IPU summit in Manila, it was Casio who distributed letters to the parliamentarians, urging them to look into the killing, detention and harassment of militant Filipino group leaders and members.

Commenting on Justice Secretary Gonzalez's threat to file new charges against the Batasan 5, Pimentel said: "Of course, Gonzalez wants to impress his boss. ... But he's clearly on the wrong side of justice." With a report from TJ Burgardo

It ain't over yet —PNP

By Luigi A. del Puerto

DESPITE THE SETBACK IN THE GOVERNMENT'S efforts to pin down the "Batasan 5," the Philippine National Police yesterday went on the offensive and attempted to downplay the court resolution rejecting the inclusion of the five in a rebellion charge.

PNP spokesperson Senior Supt. Samuel Pagdilao said the government had reserved the right to pursue the rebellion charge and might simply file a separate case against Representatives Satur Ocampo, Teodoro Casio, Liza Maza, Rafael Mariano and Joel Virador.

Thus, Pagdilao said, the party-list lawmakers' claim of victory was "hollow."

"The court has not ruled on the merits of our case," he said, adding:

"Many battles are fought before a victory is won."

Pagdilao, who called the setback a "procedural lapse," admitted that the PNP had been clearly advised by the Department of Justice against arresting the Batasan 5.

A DOJ letter, sent on Sunday night, directed the interior department and the PNP to allow the five lawmakers to leave Congress "freely and without intervention."

The letter also indicated the DOJ's intention to pursue the rebellion case.

"The advice is understood to be without prejudice to any new legal action to be undertaken by the DOJ," it said.

Asked to comment on the lawmakers' threat to sue the police, PNP Director General Arturo Lomibao said: "We welcome the filing of the case and we are confident we can defend our actions."

The PNP chief said he would leave it to the DOJ to decide on how to proceed.

He said the PNP would not stop the Batasan 5 from holding protest rallies if they were granted permits, and would ensure peaceful mass actions and controlled traffic.

Remember your ...

From page A1

nist insurgency had been a bane to the Philippines because most business investors continued to cite it as a top concern.

"The main complaint of investors in our top investment destinations—tourism, mining and outsourcing—is the threat of communist rebels," he said.

Wishful thinking

The Batasan 5—Ocampo, Bayan Muna Representatives Joel Virador and Teodoro Casio, Anakpawis Rep. Rafael Mariano and Gabriela Rep. Liza Maza—left the House of Representatives on Monday, ending a 70-day stay there under protective custody.

Their decision to leave came on the heels of a Makati judge's rejection of an amended complaint filed by the Department of Justice, which sought to include them in the rebellion case it earlier lodged against Anakpawis Rep. Crispin Beltran.

Himself a militant lawmaker, Beltran was arrested in February and is now being held at the Philippine Heart Center in Quezon City. (See story on Page A1.)

Ocampo said the National Security Council had no choice but to order the Philippine National Police to allow the Batasan 5 to leave the House without being arrested.

"The truth is, the government has no solid evidence to back its rebellion case against us," he said yesterday, dismissing as wishful thinking the threat of Solicitor General Antonio Nachura to build up new cases against them because the DOJ was "not giving up on them."

Ocampo added that by "opening his mouth and merely parroting Bert Gonzales' anticommunist line," Defensor "confirmed" that the rebellion case was "truly baseless."

'Not an option'

To Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez's remark that the Batasan 5 should "go back to the mountains," Ocampo said in a statement: "Has the Arroyo [administration] run out of ideas?"

"Going to the mountains is not

an option for us now. We have rights and responsibilities as members of Congress and as part of the parliament of the streets. We intend to help stop Charter change, aid in filing a new impeachment complaint [against Ms Arroyo], and continue the campaign to oust the Arroyo regime."

Ocampo said Gonzalez made the remark "to help him out of embarrassment and desperation."

"Only if we go to the mountains, as Gonzalez suggests, would he have at least circumstantial evidence to file a rebellion case [against us]," Ocampo said, adding that the justice secretary should go back to his law books "and relearn due process."

Disengagement

Defensor said that while he had no regrets about his affiliation with the KM, he disengaged himself from the group after four years when he was invited to join the CPP-NPA.

He said he was a KM member from 1987 to 1990.

Defensor described the radical student organization as "being part of the National Democratic Front, much like Bayan (Bagong Alyansang Makabayan), but it is not necessarily a communist front."

He said he joined KM because it was the only organization then that provided an outlet for his nationalist-democratic views, although he had misgivings about its links to left-wing groups.

Said Defensor: "[KM is] like a training ground for the Communist Party, either for its think tank or its rebel unit. On the day that I was about to be recruited and trained as one of the cadres of the CPP-NPA, I went to church and had a change of heart. I didn't want to be a communist."

He said one of the reasons for his disengagement was his disagreement with the ways of the group, such as the mass murder of alleged deep-penetration agents in Quezon and Laguna.

With a report from Gil C. Cabacungan Jr.

Chavit vows to leave ...

From page A1

Singson said.

Singson said he would also oppose Ms Arroyo if her administration obtained Estrada's release on recognizance as proposed by Presidential Chief of Staff Michael Defensor.

Estrada, 69, is detained in his rest house in Tanay, Rizal.

"I'd withdraw support [from Ms Arroyo] if Estrada is released before the case is through," Singson said, adding that to free him now would be against the law. "I say, finish the case first and then pardon him."

Singson said the plunder charge portrayed Estrada as a corrupt leader who received millions from "jueteng" lords, insider trading and excise tax kickbacks.

"The trial will all be for naught if a deal is struck," the governor said.

Fooling each other

"They're just fooling each other. Erap says he also wants reconciliation and would not support moves to oust President Arroyo. And yet, he still supports destabilization efforts," Singson said.

"President Arroyo, on the other hand, wants to strike a deal with him for reconciliation."

Singson said he would be present at the resumption of the 5-year-old Estrada trial, scheduled in two weeks, to hear the former

Chief Executive continue his testimony in his defense.

"I always attend hearings ... so I can spot miscues in his testimony to help the prosecution," Singson said.

He said he had missed only one of Estrada's five appearances at the Sandiganbayan.

Nothing new

The next phase in the trial would be the prosecution's cross-examination. But Special Prosecutor Dennis Villa-Ignacio has been quoted in newspapers as saying that there might not be any need for it because Estrada had never offered any solid evidence so far in his defense except denials.

"He [Estrada] said nothing new. He just wanted to paint me in a bad light," Singson said.

Asked about the allegations of corruption against Ms Arroyo and the involvement of her family in illegal gambling payoffs, Singson simply said that he had heard about them.

The governor, who said he wanted to be remembered as someone who always told the truth, would not comment further on First Gentleman Mike Arroyo and Pampanga Rep. Mikey Arroyo's alleged jueteng links.

"I've no comment. I already have too many enemies," Singson said.

Summer's over, here come ...

From page A1

officially the beginning of the rainy season, according to forecasting chief Herman Ngohayon of the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration.

The Pagasa weather bureau usually declares the start of the rainy season at the end of May.

The bureau's weather bulletin said the tropical depression was still too far to directly affect the country in the next 24 to 36 hours.

Packing maximum sustained winds of 55 kph, Caloy was spotted 840 km east of northern Mindanao at 11 a.m. yesterday. It is moving west at 9 kph and is forecast to be at 660 km east of Northern Mindanao today and 460 km east southeast of Southern Samar on Thursday morning.

By Friday morning, it will be 160 km east of Northern Samar, Pagasa said.

Ngohayon said there will be rain in

the Bicol region, the Eastern Visayas and Mindanao.

Pagasa warned that the rains could trigger flash floods and landslides in the Eastern Visayas and northeastern Mindanao.

The rest of the country will be partly cloudy to cloudy with isolated rain showers or thunderstorms, mostly in the afternoon or evening.

Caloy is the first of two tropical cyclones expected to affect the country this month. It is the third tropical cyclone to enter the Philippines this year, following tropical depressions Agaton on Jan. 21 and Basyang on March 6. At least 19 typhoons enter the Philippines every year.

The weather bureau has noted consistent indications of a weak La Niña in the country that will continue to influence climate. This means continuous heavy rains, the probability of more tropical cyclones and flooding in some areas.

Pagasa has said the increased oc-

currence of typhoons, floods and heavy rainfall since November 2005 may be explained by La Niña.

The country's eastern seaboard experienced "above average" rainfall during the dry months.

La Niña is a weather pattern in which unusually cool surface temperatures in the Pacific Ocean result in storm surges and strong winds. In most parts of Asia, La Niña is associated with increased rainfall, storms and flooding.

Heavy rains in December 2005 triggered landslides and flash floods in Dipolog, Zamboanga del Norte, causing the death of one farmer.

Six days of continuous rains caused the collapse of a mountainside in Southern Leyte which buried the village of Guinsaugon. The Office of Civil Defense said 154 people were confirmed dead and 978 others were missing and presumed dead in the tragedy.

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Founder and Chairman

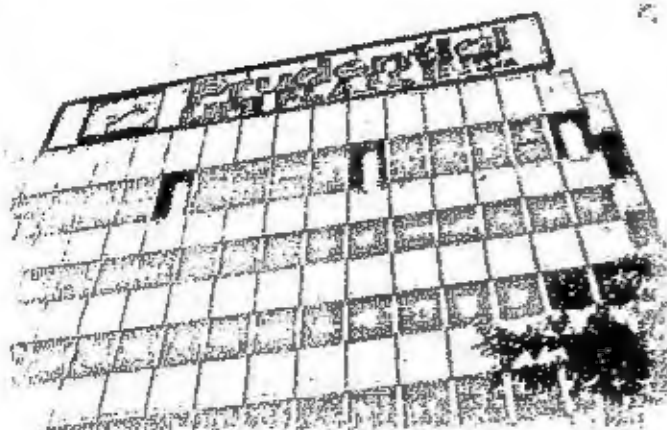
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Intermission

THE RELEASE, SO TO SPEAK, WAS PRECEDED with fireworks. Before dawn on Monday morning, New People's Army rebels strafed a communications tower of Globe Telecom in Sorsogon. The weekend had already seen various skirmishes between the military and communist rebels, with one rebel and three members of "government security forces" killed.

For the Left, all these were but a prelude to the declaration by the so-called "above-ground" party-list organizations that their representatives were leaving the premises of the House of Representatives.

For 70 days, Representatives Satur Ocampo, Teodoro Casiño, Rafael Mariano, Joel Virador and Liza Masa lived in a state of siege in the premises of the House of Representatives. State prosecutors had filed charges of rebellion against them. Fearing arrest, they appealed for sanctuary to Speaker Jose de Venecia. They remained confined to the House (except for one instance when Maza darted out to attend a Senate hearing, which had ended by the time she arrived), until a judge deemed the charges without merit, and the National Security Council sent word that the lawmakers wouldn't be arrested soon after government's policy on arrests suffered serious reversals at the hands of the Supreme Court.

The irony of political ideologues insisting on the privileges of membership in the House aside, the ordeal of what have come to be called the "Batasan 5" did raise serious questions, at the time, over the shrinking democratic space in the country, particularly in the face of administration policies aimed at either containing, if not eliminating, organized opposition. As party-list representatives, they represent not just themselves, but the constituencies—national in scope, minority in nature—that elected them. Surely any effort to deprive them of their seats needed to be clearly thought out, and taken with the need to balance the security of the state with the democratic nature of our government in mind.

As with so many decisions taken by the administration at the time (the tumultuous events of Feb. 24-25 and after), the government policy was to arrest first, and think later. The problem with that is that the arrests actually undertaken or merely ordered failed to make sense. When the President is profoundly mistrusted, neither she nor her officials can hope to simply say, "Trust us," to a skeptical public. When the government said there was a serious conspiracy to unseat it, it therefore had to fight on two fronts: in the eyes of the public and in the face of the law.

The public didn't riot in the streets in defense of the "Batasan 5," but neither did it unthinkingly applaud the administration's actions. If the Supreme Court has received applause for firmly putting the executive in its constitutional place, then the leadership of the House deserves credit for not handing over five of its members at a snap of the fingers of either the justice secretary or the chief of the Philippine National Police.

The "Batasan 5" can claim a kind of propaganda victory. But in truth, they have been able to leave the confines of the House not due to the majesty of the law, but due to uncharacteristic forbearance on the part of the executive. The President and her Cabinet have reduced some of the pressure on their critics, as we've said, due to reverses before the courts, but also so as to prevent bad publicity during her trip to Saudi Arabia. As the President's trip winds up, the official rhetoric against the "Batasan 5" has escalated. They may have secured their temporary liberty, but one of their colleagues continues to languish in detention.

Indeed, the continuing detention of Rep. Crispin Beltran is the true face of official attitudes toward party-list critics of the government. The merits (or lack of them) of the government's case continue to be studied by the courts, effectively rendering Beltran incapacitated to do his job and do more than issue ritual statements to the media.

The administration has vowed that Beltran's fate will eventually be shared by the "Batasan 5." And who will doubt its word? Where there's a will, there's a way.

That makes the departure of these representatives from their sanctuary in the House only an intermission, before they face another round of prosecution.



Setting the record straight

IN THE APRIL 24 ISSUE OF THE INQUIRER was a letter from the presidents of three neighboring subdivisions, who felt alluded to in my April 10 column about some motorists passing through the streets of Mira Nila and Tierra Pura Homes in Quezon City who refuse to pay the required vehicle sticker fees. The stickers are for faster identification of the drivers of the vehicles. Funds from the sale of the stickers are used to pay a small part of the maintenance of the streets and the salaries of security guards manning the gates. The letter-writers resented being called "freeloaders" and "tightwads." They said other things that are either totally false or half-true, and so I think the letter deserves an answer not only to set the record straight but also to help similarly placed subdivisions to understand the issues and thus to be able to solve similar problems.

To begin with, what do you call people who refuse to pay the same amount their neighbors pay to enjoy the same convenience? Aren't they freeloading on what others are paying? What do you call people who pay more than one million for some of their vehicles but find about one peso a day too much to pay for the privilege of driving those vehicles on somebody else's streets?

The letter-writers said they "pay city and national taxes." So does everybody else, but that does not exempt them from paying for the privilege to drive through private property. Others gladly pay for that privilege; only the letter-writers don't.

They said they have "complied with the sticker requirements for more than 10 years." So why do they want to stop now when the situation has not changed? The Mira Nila Homeowners' Association still repairs and keeps the streets in good condition and they continue to wear them down.

They also said they "accept the notion that we ought to contribute in some small way to the upkeep of the roads." So why are you complaining?

"We believe nobody should pay a toll to get

As I See It
Neal H. Cruz

home and that roads in the city ought to be public property maintained by the city. But this is not the case," they added.

"Yun pala. So why did they run to city officials to ask them to stop Mira Nila from selling vehicle stickers instead of asking them to maintain the roads so that Mira Nila won't find it necessary to ask them to share a little of what it costs their residents to keep the roads good enough for their use?"

When you pass through the North Luzon Expressway or the South Luzon Expressway, you pay a toll. That is because private firms maintain the expressways, not the government. The same thing goes for private subdivision roads.

"The developers of Maries Village and Tierra Gloria paid a lump sum to give village residents the right of way to pass through Tierra Pura and Mira Nila," they said.

I know that, and they still have the right of way. They are still allowed to pass through. But the sticker fees are not for the right of way, they are for the faster identification of the people passing through, and for the upkeep of the roads they are using.

Besides, Mira Nila paid a much bigger lump sum to Tierra Pura for a right-of-way through T.M. Kalaw Street, and its residents still have to buy vehicle stickers from Tierra Pura.

"We ought to distinguish between road use and security. If the homeowners of Mira Nila feel the need to contract so many security guards, then they must pay for them," the letter continued.

Well, we are paying for them without any help from neighboring subdivisions. But the trouble is that unlike most subdivisions which usually have

only two gates, we have seven, five of which lead to other subdivisions. Mira Nila would like to close some of the other gates from 11 p.m. to 5 a.m. (the time when nobody is likely to pass through but the time when bad elements are active) to save on the salaries of the guards, but its neighbors, the same ones protesting the sticker fees, are also protesting the closure of the gates during the witching hours. So we have to continue having guards there 24 hours a day, at enormous cost to our residents. We are like a rotunda, with one street coming in and many streets radiating out to other subdivisions, each of which has to be guarded.

And here are more reasons for maintaining many security guards: A family, including children, has been massacred in Mira Nila. The city police has not been able to catch the killers. A security guard of Mira Nila was shot and wounded by two men on a motorcycle coming from Maries. The guard fought back and hit one of his assailants. Recently, a man, also coming from Maries, pistol-whipped another security guard who fought back and shot him dead. In another case, a house was fired upon and the culprits escaped in a jeep through a neighboring subdivision.

In the past, a security guard of Tierra Pura was stabbed. In another case, a couple was kidnapped. In Mira Nila, there have been many thefts of side mirrors, hubcaps, bicycles inside yards, etc.

The criminals pass through the other subdivisions, most of which have outlets to Tandang Sora and Luzon Avenue, to enter Mira Nila. And that is why it has to have guards at the gates connecting it to other subdivisions. The police should be protecting the residents, but hardly any policemen patrol there, not even barangay tanods. It is largely through the efforts of the homeowners' association and its security guards that criminality has been stopped in Mira Nila. On the other hand, Mira Nila shields its neighboring subdivisions from the squatter colony on the unfinished Congressional Avenue.

(To be continued)

SOMEONE WROTE ME SOME TIME AGO saying she pretty much read everything I wrote except the ones about sports. She wasn't interested in sports, she said, and wondered why I didn't consider it, or writing about it, a waste of time.

No, I do not feel I waste my time watching sports, or writing about it, though I must confess now and then I do when I have had a surfeit of it. It makes me feel like a couch potato. Indeed, though I must confess that it sometimes gets in the way of writing columns, as has been the case with the current NBA playoffs which is shown in the mornings, the time of day I devote to writing. Otherwise, I find watching it, and writing about it, a rewarding experience.

It wasn't always so. The last thing I was when I was a kid was athletic; the first thing I was was asthmatic. The athletes in school (well, up to my college years) did little to whet my appetite for it. I recall in particular one quite popular basketball player of my college who was seated next to me in a class demanding to copy my answers in a quiz. The notion of risking flunking if I were caught coming to the aid of a bully of an idiot, or an idiot of a bully, was too much for me. I refused. He looked at me with threatening eyes, but was never able to carry out the threat afterward. It was one of my early lessons in life, one that taught that people who threaten, with word or eye, openly or veiled, normally do not do. It's the ones who do not threaten you've got to watch out for.

But to go back: I got to love sports only much, much later, and only as spectator, not as participant, which should come as an insult to purists who believe that the joy of the thing lies in the sweating. I wish I could excuse that by saying that I'd be happy just to be able to walk like a breeze, never mind fly through the air with the greatest of ease in death-defying trapeze: the goat did come unusually early for me. But it isn't that at all, it's just, well, I like walking in beaches, too, but not plunging into the sea.

This month in particular is a treasure trove of

THERE'S THE RUB
Conrado de Quiros

glittering sports events: Bata Reyes has just won the first leg of the San Miguel Pool Tournament in Vietnam, the NBA Playoffs are on, the English and Spanish football wars are being waged, and the French Open is just round the corner. And lest we forget, or be oblivious of it, all roads lead to Munich this June where the 2006 World Cup unfolds. That is an event of earth-shaking moment, though its ripples probably won't reach these shores, its inhabitants thinking the world is riveted on LeBron James.

What lured me to sports is the same thing that lured me to other things, including literature, which is human interest. Contrary to rumor, sports are not just about goals, they are also about souls. They are not just about medals, they are also about character. Indeed, if they have an important lesson to impart to the youth in particular, who are the ones constantly being cajoled into them, not least by the anti-drug campaign, it is about the real meaning of winning. At their best, sports say that you do not win by lying, cheating and stealing. You lie, cheat and steal, you are punished by disqualification, or a ban for life. It is only in this country where when you lie, cheat and steal, you are declared winner, and defended so even after proof to the contrary on the ground that there is no alternative. Sports do have much to teach about life.

The true meaning of winning you see everywhere in sports all the time. I saw a case of it only last week. I thought the Phoenix Suns were finished after Kobe's Lakers pounded them in a game the Suns should have won and left them trailing 1-3. I thought then they would be so demoralized, so rueful, so dispirited,

ed, they would be blown off in the next game and dumped in the first round of the playoffs.

I thought, well, they had reached the end of the rope after defying expectations all season, losing their second-best player to injury and inheriting unheralded players to make up for it. But to and behold, they bucked the odds, turning into a well-oiled machine with no small help from Steve Nash, the Sun whose shine rubs off on everybody, making them look brilliant, and running off near the top of the charts. (Nash by the way was the only NBA player to protest the US invasion of Iraq. A healthy mind in a healthy body? A healthy body in a healthy mind!) And lo and behold, they came back from 1-3 down to win game after game—the sixth game conversely was one the Lakers should have won—and rounded off the feat by drubbing their opponents in the deciding game last Saturday, the likes of which had rarely been seen before.

I don't know how the Phoenix Suns will fare against the Clippers in the second round, or indeed against San Antonio, if they should win. I don't much care. In my book, they've already won, and they're already champions. They've already shown what winning is all about. It isn't about overwhelming the opposition, it's about overcoming adversity. It isn't about being better than everybody else, it's about being better than you've ever been. It's, well, like being a phoenix, rising out of the ashes to soar more loftily into the skies.

The image I have which best explains how I've come to love sports is the one used in the Olympic advertisements, the one that shows a track runner who stumbles near the finish line and clutches his leg, his face a tangle of pain and anguish. He knows he has lost the race. But he picks himself up and, to applause from the stands that builds up to a crescendo and before an audience that has taken to its feet to cheer on a fallen hero, he hobbles his way to the end line.

That is character. That is winning. That is sports.

Back on the economic radar screen

THE NEWS THE OTHER DAY THAT PHILIPPINE stocks soared to their highest index in seven years broke a long spell of politically related news that have been the staple of information for 80 million Filipinos despite recent survey findings that 49 percent of Filipinos considered themselves impoverished compared to 48 percent a year ago.

The stock market surge came as a welcome relief from the flood of newspaper stories related to the series of Supreme Court decisions rolling back the administration's attempts to curtail the political rights of Filipinos. The economic news on the markets was as welcome as the report of the early arrival of La Niña, promising improved agricultural production this year.

The Supreme Court decisions were a cause for celebration among members of a small, urban-based political class composed of opponents of the regime, civil libertarians and lawyers of the triumph of democracy over a burgeoning authoritarianism. The poor people of the country were not reported in the press to have joined the lawyers' rejoicing, and their silence is an ominous symptom of the wide gap in the political values and priorities of the political/middle class and the inarticulate poorer classes. In this prolonged political crisis, that has little to do with filling the stomachs of the Filipino poor, the profile of the poor has completely disappeared from the political radar screen. The presence of the poor in urban protests demanding the resignation of President Macapagal-Arroyo has been strikingly inconspicuous.

There's no dispute that democracy and political rights are a good thing—they are essential preconditions on which economic progress can be built. But it might be well to remember that Filipinos do not live on democracy, political rights and political news alone. They also have to be able to eat three meals a day, which is the concern of the economy. This is why when there is news of some economic breakthrough, regardless of whether it happens against the background of

ANALYSIS

Amando Doronila



public revulsion at the administration, the public gets a relief from the heavy imbalance between political and economic news.

During the past many weeks, debate over EO 464 and Presidential Proclamation 1017 has dominated the national agenda. This disproportionate overdose of political news in the media has sidelined economic issues, and it has come to pass that anyone who talks about the economy is criticized as being out of sync with the political mood of the nation.

The optimistic news from the stock exchange brings cheers to a small circle of economists and financial analysts whose voice is usually drowned out by that of politicians, lawyers and detractors of the regime. But sometimes, the economists and financial analysts have to be listened to when they send an economic message. Their message shifts the focus from unproductive engagement in political turmoil and reminds us that economics and politics are intertwined.

The stock market surge suggests that the economy has not only survived the months of battering by political uncertainty but more than that, it has demonstrated resilience to the shocks of political turmoil.

The Philippine Stock Exchange Index two days ago jumped 118.93 points, or 4.8 percent, to 2,589.17. This is said to be the index's best finish since July 13, 1999, when it hit 2,604.49. Striking is that the index has risen 14 percent over the past five trading sessions, prompting an ING investment analyst to say, "This is just the beginning" and that the medium- to long-term trend

was up. He added: "This is an indication that, one, finally investors are recognizing the Philippines is back on the radar screen and, two, that the Philippines is an improving story on the macroeconomic front."

Some analysts still view the Philippines as a "laggard" player, and "so, there's probably a lot of catch-up going on right now." But other analysts note that "fundamental factors have started to improve." They point out that the government revenue shortfall has been shrinking because of the increased value-added tax, and it is on track to keeping the budget deficit within the 2006 target limit of P125 billion.

The World Bank has noted the improvement in the government's finances and foresees faster economic growth this year at 5.3 percent, compared to 5.1 percent last year. But in its semestral economic outlook on East Asia, the bank noted that despite two years of economic growth, 17 percent of Filipinos reported suffering hunger compared to 12 percent last year and over 49 percent considered themselves poor compared to 48 percent in 2005.

These data, says the WB report, suggest that "the positive growth performance in the last two years is not perceived to have been widely shared." Some analysts estimate that the economy needs to grow 7 to 8 percent per year to cut poverty significantly.

The Philippines has a brilliant record of political advocacy and dedication to the defense of political rights, as attested to by the production of judicial decisions stemming from presidential decisions curtailing political liberties. The record shows a lopsided emphasis on political rights, subordinating the importance of economic concerns.

But the failure of the economy to empower the poor helps explain their apathy to calls for political action in the cities. The poor cannot relate to middle-class reformist calls for political change. They consider these calls to have no economic meaning to them. So they stay home.

Back to the mountains?

"THEY SHOULD GO BACK TO THE MOUNTAINS because that is where they belong."

This should join the ranks of memorable political statements, along the lines of "Millionaires don't steal," "Let's call them Mr. X, Y and Z," "We are a rich country pretending to be poor," and of course, "I am sorry."

The way Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez uttered the statement, in a fit of seeming pique, he was either trying to get the goat of the "Batasan 5," at whom the statement was directed, or he was trying to salvage whatever self-respect he could. After all, this was but the latest in a string of legal swipes that the Arroyo administration has had to endure in the last month or so. One really must question the quality of the legal advice the administration has been getting, in the light of successive Supreme Court and lower court reversals. And I think the justice secretary is largely responsible for it. After all, he was the one charged with implementing these legal moves and so must have had a lot to contribute to the decision-making process.

At the height of the dispute over PP 1017, the standard reply of Malacañang to anyone who challenged the legality of the declaration of a state of emergency was "file the appropriate charges and we'll see you in court." Well, that now seems part of a monumental bluff, because when they did face their detractors in court, administration lawyers could do nothing but hang their heads in defeat, try to put a positive spin on the setback and issue mean-spirited declarations about pursuing the cases to the bitter end.

BUT there's more to Gonzalez's pique than just a brush-off. What was he really saying?

The "Batasan 5" are party-list representatives, using the space opened up by the new system to bring their advocacies and issues to a new venue, the House of Representatives. True, the five come from and maintain links to leftist organizations, and have been prominent fixtures in protests and demonstrations. But in running under the party-list system, and taking their oaths as duly elected representatives, they in effect signaled their willingness

AT LARGE

Rina Jimenez-David



to work within the legal political framework, perhaps despite their own personal doubts and cynicism.

Which is why the filing of rebellion charges, some of which date from decades back, was not only legally infirm, but also morally repulsive, because it had all the hallmarks of legal vendetta, of silencing vocal critics by using the law and the threat of incarceration.

So when he tells the party-list representatives, who triumphantly walked out of their House arrest following a lower court decision, to just "go back to the mountains," is Gonzalez saying that the better option for them would be to take up arms against the government? What for did he countenance the filing of rebellion charges against them, when he now urges them to in fact rebel? If, as he threatens, the government will file new and current charges against the five, can they call on Gonzalez as a witness for the defense?

AND what does Gonzalez mean by declaring that the five ex-Housemates "belong" in the mountains, waging armed rebellion against the government?

Is he saying that once a dissident, always a dissident? That no one can ever escape from the past or the path of rebellion? I think it was a sign of political maturity—for the political system as much as for the Left—that such visible figures were so willing to "play by the rules," so to speak, to abandon or at least largely forego their extralegal struggles for the boring work of legislation, investigation and advocacy. But for the secretary of justice to now urge them to go back to their alleged old ways, that merely confirms whatever

doubts and misgiving they and their followers had about joining the "system."

The administration's attitude seems to be that anyone who dares raise a voice of dissent or express an opinion straying from the accepted script is a communist, terrorist or destabilizer. If you're not for GMA, you're against her, and an enemy of the state, as well.

No wonder everyone seems to be losing faith in mainstream politics, or in the ability of government to effect any meaningful reform or social restructuring. And if the few who seem to promise a new or at least different way of governance come under constant attack, then we are dooming ourselves to decades of inertia and despair.

TO THOSE wondering what the judge's decision was in the "Zuma rape case," it was an acquittal for former South African Deputy President Jacob Zuma. Judge Willem van der Merwe ruled that what transpired between Zuma and the accused, known as "Khwenzi," was consensual sex, noting that the victim had failed to shout or struggle against the man she called "uncle," despite the presence of security guards and Zuma's own daughter in the house.

Khwenzi's supporters expectedly decried the decision as a "setback" for the cause of women, with one supporter saying the judgment sent messages to rape survivors, and the public, that "women make false rape claims, they can't be trusted" and that "they can be subjected to rigorous cross-examination and the law won't protect them."

As has happened in other rape cases here, the judge in the Zuma case made short shrift of expert testimony on the mindset of a woman who is being raped, appearing to put greater value on the failure of the woman to behave in the "expected" way, that is, to shout and run screaming away from the scene of the rape.

In South Africa as in the Philippines, judges still need to be educated on the nuances of post-traumatic stress syndrome, or at least to be humble enough to listen to experts talk on matters on which they have limited knowledge.

Ear piercing

LOOKING BACK

Ambeth R. Ocampo



the Bangko Sentral now on display in a vault under the Metropolitan Museum along Roxas Boulevard. If one just looks at these artifacts, their glitter is basically due to their monetary or gold value. With Alcina, we see context. We are told how and why these ornaments were worn, as well as the stylistic difference in ornaments meant to be worn by men or women. Alcina even noted that gold constricted very well with our brown complexion, our skin providing a background for the jewelry to glitter more fully.

The Visayans were fond of earrings. From infancy, both men and women had their ears pierced to accommodate two or more gold earrings. Of course, women wore more earrings, bigger pieces than the men, such that Alcina observed: "The lowest piercing was made in the earlobe and, in the course of time, the hole was made so large that, without exaggeration, one could put his entire fist through the opening, so much can flesh grow and enlarge."

Ear piercing is done so quickly and almost painlessly today compared with those times, when the following procedure was followed:

"With a needle made of copper wire, in the pierced hole they would leave a small cord or a kind of a thick thread of cotton until the wound healed, free from swelling or scab (this took several months or even a year). Then with a piece of bamboo or with another type of wood, which does not secrete any humors and is dry, they inserted something like a leaf stalk, which they kept replacing with one that was gradually larger

and larger, until it became possible to pass the little finger through the opening. Then they took a leaf from a tree called bari, about two or three fingers in width and about a fathom or more in length, like the great cat-tails of Spain, but a little more firm, more smooth and polished. They allow it to dry somewhat and then cut a piece of about three fingers more or less, and then roll it up little by little, three or four turns and thus insert it into the hole of the ear. They change this insertion from time to time and each time add several more windings to it. These compressed windings, when inserted into the hole, tend to unroll, creating a force of expansion; with this moderate tension, the opening tend to be enlarged without any seeming sensation or pain. Often as many as 20 windings make up the insert, whence the opening is ready to hold one of these earrings."

That's not even half as fantastic as having holes on the ears big enough to accommodate a fist. Alcina concluded the section on ear piercing thus:

"When the women quarrel among themselves, they reach out for each other's ears and rip them up terribly. Oftentimes, they heal them by bringing the torn portions together and tying them up with certain types of herbs, which aid the healing process quite well. At other times, they remove the torn portions completely and one does not even notice it, because they wear the second earring at all times (for they do not wear the large ones at home, nor even every time they step out, but only when they are fully dressed) and thus they cover up the defect. This is especially true if the fringes are rather long and hang in great quantity like little golden spangles. What more, with the movement of the body or the blowing of the wind, these are made to glisten and thus detract from what has been marred."

I'm glad we live in the 21st century, the past being truly a foreign country.

Comments are welcome at ocampo@atenzo.edu

Juvenile justice

I HAVEN'T BEEN ABLE TO THANK UNICEF AND THE Philippine Press Institute for the "Outstanding Column on Children" award they gave me last month. It's the third year in a row that they've given me the award, and this time, it was for a column ("Kids behind bars") which I did last August, focusing on the plight of Filipino children thrown into jail, sometimes held for extended periods without trial.

A week after the awards, I read that the President signed RA 9344 or the Juvenile Justice and Welfare Act of 2006. We should be congratulating Sen. Francis Pangilinan for being so persistent in getting that law passed, a major victory for child welfare advocates. Now the hard work begins, and the first step is to get the public to understand this new law.

Not criminals

Even without detailed implementing rules and regulations, the law is quite comprehensive and could eventually become a model for other countries. Let's look at some of its major provisions:

A Juvenile Justice Welfare Council will be set up to implement the law. This council will be under the Department of Justice, but headed by a Department of Social Welfare undersecretary.

The law is clear in explaining that we are not dealing with criminals. What we have are "children in conflict with the law." A child 15 years old or below at the time he or she commits an offense "shall be exempt from criminal liability." The same provision applies to those aged 15 to 18, but with a difficult provision: "unless he/she has acted with discernment." For serious offenses, the offender could be sent to a rehabilitation center, but definitely not a prison. (The situation was so bad at one time that we even had minors sent to Death Row!)

There are additional safeguards now even for the initial apprehension and investigation. For example, the police are not supposed to display or use firearms, weapons or handcuffs unless absolutely necessary, and only after other methods of control have failed. I have to commend Senator Pangilinan and others involved in drafting this law for being so sensitive to the needs of the young. I've talked with so many young urban poor youth with traumatic memories of handcuffs, for example.

Exemption from criminal liability does not mean total impunity, with provisions for "diversion programs" that will include, among other activities, mediation and conflict resolution, reparation for damages, a written or oral apology and counseling, anger management training, vocational training and community service.

Child-rearing schizos

The new law talks about the role of the family, the educational system, even the mass media in the prevention of juvenile delinquency. We could start by "interrogating" our culture, as it relates to child-rearing.

When it comes to child-rearing practices, we can be quite schizophrenic. We can be very loving, to the point of being excessively indulgent and giving in to whatever the child wants. Yet, I've seen this indulgence alternating with great harshness, often depending on the parent's mood. I know many Filipino parents, very good and kind people, who will insist corporal punishment is necessary for discipline, with the punishment becoming quite extreme. I've seen Filipino children being punched, slapped, kicked, boxed in public. "Milder" but still reprehensible forms of child discipline involve verbal abuse: I am shocked at how a child is called "gago" and "stupid" for the mildest of slip-ups.

To complicate matters, we often resort to the use of external authorities to try to get kids to behave. Note how with younger misbehaving children, Filipino parents will threaten to call the police. With adolescents, parents may actually drag the child to a police station and beg them to jail the child "to teach him a lesson."

Child psychology studies have shown corporal punishment and shaming tactics don't work. The handcuffs, the police and barangay officials' own verbal abuse—these do not help the young to respect the law. Instead, they become even more contemptuous of authority. With young boys raised on machismo values, defying the law might even be seen as a sign of courage and valor.

'Mabait'

Besides looking at the deficiencies in our child-rearing, we also need to interview the children who have already come into conflict with the law and to find out what were the trigger points that turned them into offenders.

My own experience, working with students and with urban poor communities, is that when something goes seriously wrong, it's often an unhappy home environment (often a failed marriage where the couple is forced to stay together) that produces tensions, even hostility. When the child comes into conflict with the law, it's usually a mixture of motives: defiance together with a desperate cry for attention.

There are, too, youthful offenses involving petty theft, and this I blame on a consumerist society where the young, grappling with questions about who they are, begin to believe all those ads that tell them: "You are what your clothes' brand names say you are" or "You are what your cell phone is." I challenge those in the private sector to put their words where their mouth is with regard to "corporate social responsibility" and examine their marketing gimmicks.

And the adults?

As I read RA 9344, I kept thinking, "What about the adults?" Some of the proposed interventions in RA 9344 could be useful for adult offenders, whether in jail or out. Anger management skills is one. Even in the hallowed "civilized" halls of UP, I've had to live in the shadows of faculty and administrative personnel who fly into rage and inflict physical harm, which then results in administrative charges and hearings that just drag on and on for years, making life more difficult for the victims. I've always felt a better solution is to negotiate with these offenders: "Go through psychiatric counseling and we won't file charges."

Helping adult offenders will eventually benefit the young. Think about it: Most of the adult offenders with cases of assault are really little boys who refuse to grow up. And when these guys become fathers, their sons look up to them as role models, picking up the idea that to get your way, you need to rage and to resort to force.

RA 9344 is really a form of affirmative action, addressing a question of class inequity. Let's face it, rich kids don't get thrown into jail. The less fortunate, the poor, are thrown into jail at age 14 or 15. In the company of street-wise, hardened inmates, these kids are condemned for that one raging lapse of judgment, while their richer counterparts just go on to become nastier bullies.

RA 9344 will keep our young out of jail, but they will still have to cope with the harsh realities of home and street life. Juvenile justice will require more than one law and much, much more work with the adults who shape the lives of the young.

One-dish 'cafeteria'

IF YOU WANT A SOCIETY governed by religion, move to Iran. If you can't, then you may want to convince Antonio Montalvan to run for president. In his April 17 column, "Gullibility," Montalvan wrote about the ills of "cafeteria Christianity." Apparently, he has qualms about the idea of choice—choosing if one should worship, who to worship and how to worship—as well as the idea of people defining their own morality as their own God-given mind and conscience dictate. Perhaps, more accurately, he has a problem with people not going along with his chosen beliefs.

I am sure that Montalvan has nothing but the best of intentions, so I shall indulge him by envisioning the kind of Philippines that, possibly, would be more to his liking.

What kind of society would he have us choose? Most likely one where, to borrow the words of Fr. Roy Cumigala, we pursue human development and maturity totally within the forces of religion and faith. Religious totalitarianism?

But which religion? Christianity? Islam? Let us not forget the many denominations and the myriad flavors in which each faith comes. There are so many to choose from—as many as, say, the variety of dishes offered in a large university cafeteria.

But Montalvan thinks the cafeteria paradigm is the devil's work. We should be served only one course, which we must swallow whole and be happy with. Therefore, I shall indulge him further by picking one sect out of the whole mess—Catholicism (the religion of our majority).

What then shall we do with the other ideologies and faiths that do not mix well with Catholicism? They have no place on Montalvan's table. They must therefore be expunged from our schools, our libraries, our televisions and our minds.

And what about that annoying document called the Constitution, with its heretic guarantees of free expression? Of course, throw it into the bonfire together with "The Da Vinci Code." And what of those

who are not in line with our enlightened Catholic thought (Muslims, atheists, homosexuals)? Do we have a place for them?

Is this the kind of society we really want? It is fair to say that I am grossly exaggerating the logical extensions of Montalvan's vision.

Montalvan probably just wants a fair amount of religious input in the classrooms, government and media. However, he is also guilty of exaggeration when, in his column, he refers to "The Da Vinci Code" as a "danger." (He probably thinks it at par with Hitler's "Mein Kampf.") His over-the-top reaction to a work virtually everyone acknowledges to be a work of fiction appalled me.

Simply reading a book does not imply that you believe in what it says. Is the Church he seems to represent really that insecure?

—CHUCK SAMSON,
Barkechild_C@yahoo.com

Passé issues and conjectures about SSS

PLEASE ALLOW US TO CORRECT inaccuracies in Conrado Banal III's column titled "Walk in the parks." (PDI, 4/11/06) It is unfortunate that we have to keep making this kind of corrections in the INQUIRER, the country's leading newspaper.

The column discussed Social Security System president and chief executive officer Corazon de la Paz's supposed stand on the proposal of Banco de Oro to merge with Equitable PCIBank (EPCIB).

1. "Unlike the GSIS... the SSS has no interest whatsoever to make the best of OUR billions of pesos sank in EPCIB and the Palace is tolerating it."

This statement is sweeping and unfair. The SSS was the first institution to signify its interest to sell its shares in EPCIB in order to reinvest the proceeds in safer and higher-yielding treasury bills. Our move sparked renewed interest in the bank, which has resulted in the appreciation of its share price.

2. "But the president of SSS, Corazon de la Paz, loves the takeover-disguised-as-a-merger proposal of the SM group. She

does not want the SSS to join the bidding."

The issue about the SSS allegedly supporting the merger is passé. No use beating a dead horse. The merger proposal was never discussed in the EPCIB board and the date in which the EPCIB board must decide has lapsed. If a merger will ever happen, it might be with another bank and not necessarily with BDO.

3. "I don't buy this studying the-options BS at all. Methinks that the SSS boss wants the SSS to keep its investments in the bank, whether EPCIB or BDO, to keep the perks."

The statement is pure conjecture. The SSS has been very vocal in its stand that it wants to dispose of its shares in EPCIB, starting with the transaction it entered with BDO in December 2003.

4. "Moreover, she still has to deliver on her promise to audit the P16 billion in missing EPCIB funds—the money that the Go family used to pay for the old PCIBank."

EPCIB's Audit Committee is reviewing a report concerning the alleged P16-billion obligation of

the Go family to the bank as a result of the merger of Equitable and PCIBank. The committee is expected to present its report any time soon.

Banal has been unfairly critical about the overseas trips of De la Paz in connection with her position as president of the Geneva-based International Social Security Association (ISSA), the biggest association of social security organizations in the world, which has 350 members from 150 countries.

The SSS does not spend money on those trips even though they were approved by the Social Security Commission and the Department of Finance. As ISSA president, she is expected to participate in international meetings and various fora on social security issues such as pension reforms, health and safety at work, investment of pension funds, migration and women and children.

—JOEL R. PALACIOS,
assistant vice president,
Media Affairs Department,
Social Security System,
East Avenue, Diliman,
Quezon City

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The way to straighten crooked officials

I WANT TO SAY MY TEN CENTS' WORTH ON Jo Smith Medina's reaction to Conrado de Quiros' column titled "Thank God for Theresa Pangilinan." (PDI, 5/2/06)

I disagree with Medina. She said Pangilinan "graduated without learning basic good manners and right conduct." I admire her for expressing her dissatisfaction with the President in a very bold manner. What she did took lots of courage. It takes courage to fight corruption in high places. Shenangans in government, including electoral fraud, must not be tolerated, and if heckling crooked public officials is what it will take to stop them in their tracks, then we should be willing to put our lives on the line.

Do you think corrupt government officials will turn away from their crookedness if we try to persuade them with kind words only? Not a chance! That would be like talking to a brick wall, or spitting into the wind.

We should thank Pangilinan. We need more people like her.

—BILL SABALBURO, cacio123@yahoo.com



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PNP chief confirms 'jueteng' return

By Luige A. del Puerto

THE CHIEF OF THE PHILIPPINE NATIONAL POLICE confirmed the resurgence of the illegal numbers game jueteng and ordered reactivated an anti-gambling task force dissolved early this year.

Nearly half of text messages he had received during the last few days were complaints on the revival of jueteng, according to Director General Arturo Lomibao. Some of the complaints came from clergymen, he said. "Yesterday, I have (ordered)

the reactivation of the anti-jueteng task force, which would be handled by the CIDG (Criminal Investigation and Detection Group)," he told reporters. "We'll reinvigorate our campaign (against jueteng)," he added.

The CIDG is the Philippine National Police's primary investigative arm.

Before its dissolution in the first quarter of 2006, the Anti-Illegal Gambling Task Force was under the PNP-Operations Center. The task force had recommended the relief of dozens of provincial and city directors, town police chiefs, and precinct commanders.

It was deactivated when Small Time Lottery, bankrolled by the Philippine Charity Sweepstakes Office, was given the go-signal to conduct test runs in Luzon. Anti-

gambling crusaders warned that jueteng lords would use STL as a cover for their operations.

Although Lomibao did not directly blame the operation of STL, he said jueteng operators appeared to be riding its back. Lomibao said jueteng operators have apparently made STL a "front" for their illegal activity.

It is also possible that people have mistaken STL for jueteng because of their similarities, he said. It was also possible that STLs collectors are simply former jueteng collectors.

WHAT'S INSIDE

• Isabela gov says PNP war on 'jueteng' farce

• Army probes safety pass issued Sayyaf man

• Mt. Province ideal for wind energy



Opposition to STL grows as police smell 'jueteng'

THE FACE OF SMALL TOWN LOTTERY (STL), the government-sponsored betting game designed to replace jueteng, is being unmasked.

A bishop in Bulacan was added to the growing list of Church leaders who are protesting the operations of STL just as police in Quezon arrested 29 supposedly STL workers who were suspected of actually collecting bets for jueteng.

"We do not need gambling in Bulacan," said Bulacan Bishop Jose Oliveros, who added his voice to the growing clamor to stop STL.

He said he made known his stand to Bulacan officials who sought his opinion on STL in the province. "Gambling, whether legal or il-

legal, should be discouraged in the context of our Philippine situation. The poor are always the losers in such a setup. It encourages the wrong attitude towards work because it brings false hopes to the people," he said.

But Oliveros said his position against STL is his personal stance and does not reflect that of his diocese. "To come publicly on the matter needs further consultation from our priests and the people in general. As of now, the CBCP pastoral letter stands," he said.

STL has been operating in Bulacan for about two weeks now. Guiguinto Mayor Ambrosio Cruz, president of the League of Munici-

palities in Bulacan, said the STL started its dry-run in the towns of Guiguinto, San Ildefonso, Pardi, Sta. Maria and San Miguel on April 27.

Cruz said the Diamond Gaming and Research Center Corp. (DGRCC) runs the game in Bulacan.

Cruz said they welcomed the STL operations because the 10-percent share of local governments from its proceeds would help sustain the needs of their people.

But Cruz said he would not go out of his way to encourage his constituents to patronize the STL. "We will allow the people to decide. We will just accept what will be given to us as the municipal government's share," he said.

In Quezon, police arrested the 29 STL workers in the residential compound of Raul Umali, mayor of Tiaong town.

Senior Insp. Nathaniel Villegas, head of the arresting team, said the 29 were arrested in Villa Rosano Subdivision, where Umali's house is.

Umali denied that he was running an illegal numbers game in his residence.

"What they wrongfully raided was the local STL (Small Town Lottery) station in my town. All the persons they arrested were legal STL employees. And that was not my house but my mother-in-law's," Umali said in a phone interview.

He said the STL franchise holder in

Quezon has been paying his mother-in-law P300 a day for office space.

But Villegas said the arrested men and women were not employees of STL but collectors of "bookies."

"From our list of towns with STL operations, Tiaong was not included," Villegas said.

Romy Quibones, Philippine Charity Sweepstakes Office manager for special projects, said the STL operation in Quezon covers the province's 40 towns.

The PCSO granted the provincial franchise for the STL operation to Pirouette Corp. based in Manila.

The company was allowed by the Sangguniang Panlalawigan to operate the STL through Resolution No.

2005-676 dated Oct. 3, 2005.

Lawyer Cesarito Villariba, counsel of Pirouette, assailed the raid.

"That's an illegal raid ..., he said.

Villegas said most of the arrested suspects did not have ID cards issued by the PCSO.

"It's easy to manufacture fake ID's," he said.

Leopoldo Pangan, who introduced himself as Pirouette's representative in Tiaong and one of the arrested suspects, said the ID cards were still being processed.

Carmela Reyes, PDI Central Luzon Desk and Delfin Mallari Jr., PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

ROUNDUP

Drivers seek fare hike

GENERAL SANTOS CITY—Jeepney drivers and operators here are asking for a P1 50 fare hike. They said they needed the increase to defray increasing costs of fuel. Orly Sabellita, chair of the Confederation of Transport Cooperatives (Contra), the biggest transport cooperative in the Central Mindanao region, said the petition has been submitted to the Land Transportation Franchising and Regulatory Board. The proposed minimum fare for the first four kilometers is P8, and an additional P1 for every succeeding kilometer. The current minimum fare here is P6.50 for the first four kilometers. *Aquiles Zonia, PDI Mindanao Bureau*



6 nabbed for theft

COTABATO CITY—Police arrested six persons while they were allegedly robbing two female workers of a videoka on Notre Dame Avenue here Friday. City police spokesperson Senior Insp. Samson Obatay said Ali Haron, Roel Prada, Morris Abdula, Nur Mamilankas, Odin Mama and Joel Raptan were arrested by policemen who happened to pass by while the suspects were robbing Allen Henry-Jalandoni and May Bacog. Seized from the suspects were a wristwatch, cash and a toy gun. The group's leader escaped. *Charlie Sañosa, PDI Mindanao Bureau*

85 scholarships for ex-rebs

DAVAO CITY—At least 85 scholarship slots are still available for former rebels or their relatives who are planning to pursue college degrees, Presidential Peace Adviser Jesus Dureza said. The scholarship program is on its fifth year. The study program, which is open to former members of the Communist Party of the Philippines-National Democratic Front-New People's Army (CPP-NPA-NDF), the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) and the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) or their relatives, comes with an annual fund of P10,000 for each beneficiary. *PDI Mindanao Bureau*



1 dies in Quezon mishap

LUCENA CITY—One person died and three others were injured after a bus rammed a tricycle along the Maharlika Highway in Lopez, Quezon on Thursday. Police identified the fatality as Anthony Valencia, 29, an employee of Magsaysay Memorial Hospital in Lopez. The tricycle driver and the passengers, who suffered serious injuries, were taken to a local hospital, where Valencia died. The bus driver did not stop and went on to Bicol. The bus also hit a parked cargo truck, injuring a bystander. *Delfin Mallari Jr., PDI Southern Luzon Bureau*

Bicol journalist dies

LEGAZPI CITY—Veteran Bicol journalist and INQUIRER contributor Carlos S. Geganoca, 68, died on Friday. Tio Celing, as he was fondly called, was a past president of the Albay-Legazpi Press Association Inc. and a professor at the Bicol University Graduate School. He had written several books and was also a columnist of the Bicol Chronicle and the Weekly Digest. He is survived by wife Erlinda, daughter Caroline and son-in-law Lupo Rojas Jr., and sisters Lilia, married to Angel Rea, and Nena, married to Cesar Casilio. His remains lie at the Nuestra Sra. de Saivacion in Barangay Bonot in this city. Interment is at 2 p.m. on May 13 at the Bicol Memorial Park.

Albay delegation to China

LEGAZPI CITY—Albay will host a delegation from the People's Republic of China to the 31st Unesco-International Theater Institute World Congress to be held on May 17-31 in Metro Manila. Other country delegations will be hosted by other key cities and provinces in the country where workshops on arts and culture will be held. Albay officials will welcome the visiting Chinese artists at the Peñaranda Park here, while theater and arts aficionados from different schools, local government units and private organizations in Albay are expected to join the Chinese workshops. *PDI Southern Luzon Bureau*

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Isabela gov slams police 'farce' on 'jueteng'

By Melvin Gascon
PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

ILAGAN, ISABELA—GOV. MARIA Gracia Cielo Padaca on Tuesday denounced the supposed "farce" campaign of the local police against the illegal numbers game jueteng, which returned in the province last month.

Padaca lamented the slow responses of Director General Arturo Lomibao, Philippine National Police chief, and Chief Supt. Jefferson Soriano, Cagayan Valley police director, to her repeated pleas to stop jueteng in the province.

"I called up General Lomibao and he said [he] would act on it. That was last Wednesday. I think [Lomibao] has already talked to General Soriano, but I wonder why it's still the same situation. Jueteng has not been stopped," she said.

Padaca assailed the local po-

lice's excuse of citing arrests of bet collectors in justifying their campaign against illegal gambling.

"What's this? A show [with] a script? I was not born yesterday. I don't buy their style of going after the cobradores [bet collectors]," she said.

"I do not believe that the approach should be to go after the cobradores. Jueteng is simply controlled by just one group, why don't you [in the police] deal with them?" Padaca said, recalling her conversation with Soriano.

She suspected that the recent designation of Senior Supt. Oscar Fiesta, acting Isabela police director, was made purposely to allow the resumption of jueteng in the province after a year of absence.

"I told General Soriano that the impression of the people [of Isabela] is that Fiesta brought with him jueteng to the province," she said.

Padaca showed the INQUIRER transcripts of text messages sent to him by residents, confirming jueteng bet collections in at least 10 towns and in Cauayan City. She said she started receiving the messages two days after Fiesta assumed office.

Soriano, however, said the recent reassignment of about 100 policemen to the coastal towns of Palanan, Divilacan, Maconacon and Dinapigue had slowed local police operations against jueteng.

"We had to pull out personnel from various police stations to augment the forces in highly critical areas, in anticipation of another rebel attack," Soriano said.

He said Lomibao sent a special operations team from the PNP headquarters in Camp Crame to launch a crackdown on jueteng in Isabela.

"We will spare no one in this campaign," Soriano said.

Fiesta said the police had been



PADACA

conducting a "sustained and all out" campaign against the illegal numbers game.

He said they were raiding reported venues of jueteng bet collections and draws, but what policemen discovered were activities of collectors of EZ-2, a government-sanctioned lottery.

Mt. Province tagged ideal site to generate power through wind

BONTOC, MT. PROVINCE—Local officials have identified Mt. Province as a source of wind energy which can provide electricity for the province and nearby areas.

Thomas Kilip, presidential assistant for Cordillera affairs, said some Japanese investors visited the country to look at potential wind energy technology in Northern Luzon, particularly Mt. Province.

In a study conducted in the 1990s by a team, led by former Energy Undersecretary Rufino Bomasang, Sagada, Besao and Tadian towns, all in Mt. Province, were identified as potential areas for wind energy, Kilip said.

"There is wind throughout the year in these areas... In wind energy, the constant flow of the wind is more important and not its strength," he said.

Robert Pangod, researcher of the Montafiosa Resource and Development Center (MRDC), said the entry of new and renewable energy sources in the provinces should be supported because they were sustainable, economical and environment friendly.

A non-government organization in Mt. Province, the MRDC is a prime mover of microhydro technology. It has installed microhydro dams in Mt. Province, Kalinga, Ifugao and

Abra.

"Any kind of alternative energy, such as solar or wind power, should be supported because they are more sustainable. For now, wind energy is becoming more and more popular," Pangod said.

He said his group was studying the feasibility of wind power in Mt. Province. He said the research on wind energy was inspired by the sustainability of wind farms in Pagudpud, Ilocos Norte, which generate 500 watts of electricity.

One of the sites where a wind turbine could be set up is Lake Danum in Sagada, he said. The turbine could generate 20 megawatts, which is more than enough to light the entire province.

A Department of Energy report said the best wind resources were found in Batanes and the Babuyan Islands; Ilocos Norte; the higher interior terrain of Luzon, Mindoro, Samar, Leyte, Panay, Negros, Cebu, Palawan, eastern Mindanao and adjacent islands; coastal areas from Northern Luzon to Samar; wind corridors between Luzon and Mindoro, including Lubang Island; and between Mindoro and Panay, including Semirara, and Cuyo Island. Desiree Calusa, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau



WOMEN of Jones town in Isabela take part in street dancing contests to celebrate the province's 150th founding anniversary.

Mayors' boycott won't stop Isabela festival

ILAGAN, ISABELA—THE WEEK-long celebration of this province's 150th founding anniversary started on Sunday despite the non-participation of 20 towns supposedly infuriated by mayors not allied with Gov. Maria Gracia Cielo Padaca.

Alicia Mayor Napoleon Dy, who is also the president of the Isabela Mayors League, said he and the other mayors discussed the boycott to show their sentiments on the alleged lack of concern of the provincial government over some pressing issues.

"At first, we were very cooperative in dealing with the provincial leaders, but we were left out groping in the dark," he said. He, however, clarified that most mayors did not participate due to conflicting schedules with their town fiestas.

Dy's brother, Cauayan City Mayor Caesar Dy, however, said he was not amenable to the consensus of most mayors, claiming that the "issue in the celebration is not the person but the public interest."

He said the city government joined in the sports contest to show that they were not among those who boycotted the festivities.

Unfazed, Padaca urged Isabelinos to stand together "to both honor the past and go on with the challenges of the future."

"We should eternally thank our forefathers for the good things they have done for our province. All of us who are gathered here in this once-in-a-lifetime event play a vital role in our history," she told about 4,000 residents who attended Thursday's opening ceremonies at the newly renamed Gov. Melanio Singson Memorial Sports Complex in Barangay Ali-bagu here.

Padaca said the sports complex was being renamed to honor former Gov. Melanio Singson, who

was once this province's congressional representative and justice secretary.

"I ask all of you that we make the best of this role that we have in the province's history. We have already learned our lessons from the past; let us not forget these lessons," she added.

The event's opening activity featured, among other events, a street-dancing competition and a trade fair and exhibit showcasing the towns' various products and tourist attractions.

Padaca told the INQUIRER that her political differences with some of the mayors and the botched operation of Small Town Lottery had gotten in the way of the milestone celebration.

She belittled the absence of the town mayors.

"In fairness, Isabela is not the mayors alone. Even if their [local government] is not here, civil society and non-government organizations and the people themselves are here," she said.

She cited the participation of schools and other government agencies, as well as of groups from the private sector, that, despite the absence of the mayors and town employees, had shown strong support for the celebration.

"Besides, since I became governor, it was always the people—the Isabelinos—who are important to me, not the politicians," she added.

Napoleon Dy, however, denied that politics and STL were behind the supposed boycott.

"We [in the LMP] are even trying to unite the relationship between the [provincial government] and the mayors, but some of the mayors feel that they are not being accepted," said Dy, brother of former Gov. Faustino Dy Jr., Padaca's political arch rival.

Villamor Visaya Jr. and Melvin Gascon, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

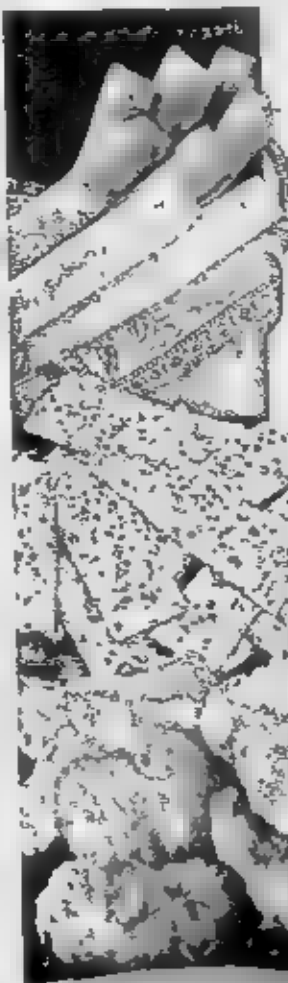
Reyes fires 2 DENR men in Surigao

BUTUAN CITY—Environment Secretary Angelo Reyes sacked two ranking environment officials in Surigao del Sur following last month's series of raids on a politician's property that yielded some 11,500 pieces of illegally cut logs.

Benjamin Tumaliuan, Caraga environment chief, said Diego Escano, provincial environment and natural resources officer, and Philip Calusag, the community environment and natural resources officer of Lungs town, had been served their walking papers last week and are now being investigated.

Tumaliuan said Escano and Calusag had been accused of laxity in the drive against illegal logging.

On April 9, the two environment officials joined a raid on a farm owned by Langit Mayor Roberto Luna Jr. Franklin Caligad, PDI Mindanao Bureau



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Army to probe pass given Sayyaf man

ZAMBOANGA CITY—THE MILITARY'S Southern Command said it would investigate the alleged issuance of a safe conduct pass to a suspected member of the Abu Sayyaf.

Col. Antonio Supnet, Southcom chief of staff, said he would discuss the report with Maj. Romulo Quemado, Military Intelligence Group 9 commander.

"I will ask him about this, because we from the AFP are not supposed to release any pass to any Abu Sayyaf member," Supnet said.

Two weeks ago, local journalist Ronan Lomongo distributed photocopies of an alleged safe conduct pass issued to Sparte Amiruddin, alias Abu Omar, that was valid from March 7 to April 7, by the Military Intelligence Group.

Amiruddin was arrested on April 24, 18 days after the pass expired.

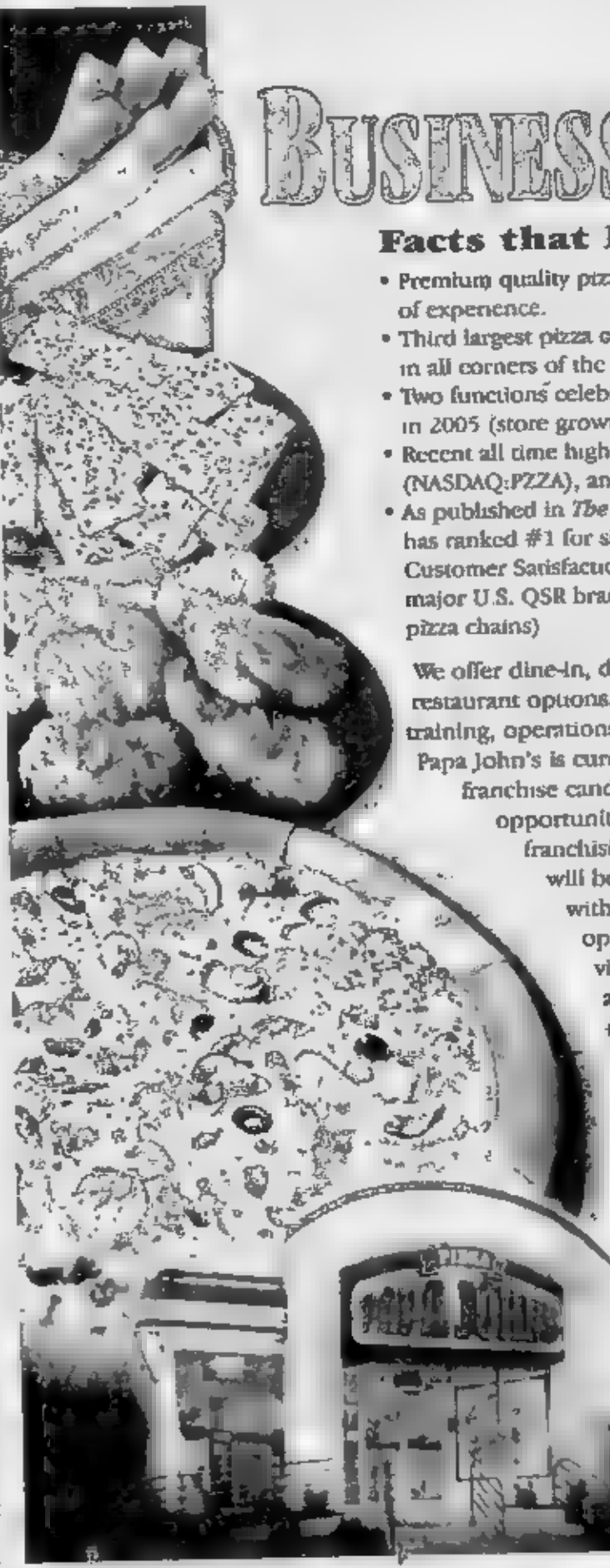
"We will investigate if, indeed, there's truth to that," Supnet said, requesting media to give him a copy of the safe conduct pass.

Quemado earlier denied issuing any safe conduct pass. He said if indeed Amiruddin possessed one, it was fake.

Sulu Gov. Benjamin Loong confirmed to the INQUIRER that operatives of the Jamaah Islamiyah (JI) have sought refuge in his province in January.

"Talogang may JI dito. In fact, it was A-1 information. I even sent my trusted informant to verify the report," Loong said.

Julie Alipala, PDI Mindanao Bureau



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METRO

Editor Ester G. Dipasupil

Use of deep wells to stay in 3 Metro Manila cities

Water board says there is no alternative water source

By Leila B. Salaverria

THE NATIONAL WATER RESOURCES BOARD cannot stop residents and establishments in three Metro Manila cities from using deep wells because of the lack of an alternative water source in these areas.

NWRB Executive Director Ramon Alikpala identified the three cities as Las Piñas, Parañaque and Muntinlupa.

He said that the Maynilad Water Services Inc. does not have enough resources to provide adequate water supply to these areas, which is why residents and establishments have to resort to using deep wells.

"Maynilad doesn't have enough water, so we're forced to allow people to use the critical source, the deep wells, in those areas," Alikpala said at the Bulong Pulungan forum.

"In other areas, I am campaigning to shut down deep wells. But in those areas, I can't afford to shut them down because there's no alternative," he added.

Alikpala said he had already informed Maynilad of the need to increase the water supply in the three cities.

According to the official, prohibiting the use of deep wells in Las Piñas, Parañaque and Muntinlupa could lead to a lack of water in subdivisions and establishments

The water board has been trying to reduce the use of deep wells as these might contaminate the ground water supply, lead to land subsidence and the intrusion of salt water into the water supply.

He added that in most Metro Manila cities and nearby provinces, the aquifer level is lower than the sea level, which is a "critical" situation. (An aquifer is an underground layer of water-bearing rock or unconsolidated materials—gravel, sand, silt, or clay—from which groundwater can be extracted using a water well).

Alikpala said it was important to protect the aquifers because these are the only alternative water source, if the dams dry up.

"If we don't protect the aquifers, we are shooting ourselves in the foot," he said.

Alikpala said the NWRB's campaign to stop the use of illegal deep wells has targeted big hotels and shopping malls.

In earlier reports, the NWRB identified the Landmark mall, the Greenhills Shopping Center, SM Fairview and the Meralco office as some establishments which were using illegal deep wells.

Alikpala said establishments usually decide to extract their own water because it was cheaper than getting it from the concessionaire. But he added that the environmental costs from using deep wells were costlier.

THREE cities in the metropolis—Las Piñas, Muntinlupa and Parañaque—will not have enough water for the needs of residents and establishments if the government's water board shuts down deep wells in these areas. The National Water Resources Board, however, has warned of adverse environmental consequences if the wells continue to operate.

REUTERS PHOTO

Safety check on dormitories, boardinghouses in U-Belt begins

By Tina G. Santos and Erika Sauler, trainee

AS PART OF ITS PREPARATION FOR THE opening of classes, the local government of Manila has started its routine inspection of dormitories and boarding houses in the city.

"This is to protect our students, especially those living in the university belt area," said Councilor Ernesto Dionisio, City Council majority floor leader.

Many sub-standard dormitories, some of them virtual fire traps, have sprouted in the area for students with meager resources.

Dionisio said they have already tasked officials of the city fire bureau, as well as building

and bureau of permits officials to check if dormitory or boardinghouse owners had complied with fire safety standards, adding that most of them are old, crowded and poorly ventilated structures. General safety requirements include fire protection equipment, including fire extinguishers, sprinklers and hoses, fire alarm systems, emergency lights, fire exits and fire exit signages.

A team led by the City Administrator's Office will check the electrical wirings and facilities, such as water, fire exits, toilets and common areas, Dionisio said. Last January eight people were killed in a fire that gutted a two-story boarding house in Sampaloc, Manila.

Taguig honors 2 honest employees

By Rica G. Obsequio, trainee

TWO EMPLOYEES OF THE TAGUIG CITY Hall were commended by Mayor Freddie Tingga after they returned P40,000 in cash to a businessman who dropped the money while walking on the fourth level of the Market! mall last week.

Valuable find

Edgardo Sta. Ana and Efren Aquino of the city's Area 4 Satellite Government Center were in the mall on May 3 when they found the wad of bills on the floor.

The two said they immediately went to the administration office to report their find.

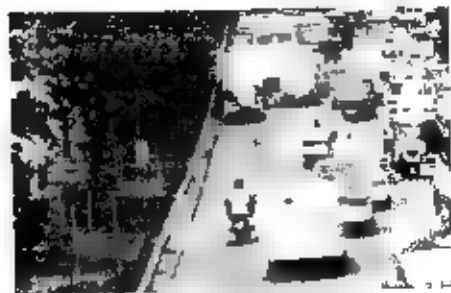
As Sta. Ana and Aquino were talking to officials of the department store, Efren Pangiban, a businessman, walked in with another man, to report that he had lost his money.

Trust

Tinga commended the two local government employees for their honesty, saying that what they did will help "us realize our goal of getting the public to trust people in the government."

The two honest employees will be honored during a ceremony in city hall this week.

WHAT'S INSIDE



■ **P1.3B earmarked for 9 Metro roads' facelift** /A20

■ **Motorcycle-riding bandits rob Manila gas station** /A20

■ **Ex-cop nabbed for bribing colleagues to go slow on illegal races betting** /A20



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P1.3B for roads rehab project

By Michael Lim Ubac

THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES HAS earmarked P1.3 billion for the construction and rehabilitation of nine major thoroughfares in Metro Manila.

The allocation was included in this year's proposed P1-trillion national budget which has yet to be passed by the Senate.

House Deputy Majority Leader Eduardo Gullas said the money would be spent for the "construction, rehabilitation, widening and/or improvement" of major roads in the National Capital Region.

"This will decongest vehicular traffic in Metro Manila in a big way," said Gullas, adding that the poor condition of roads in the metropolis was to blame for the daily monstrous traffic jams and road accidents.

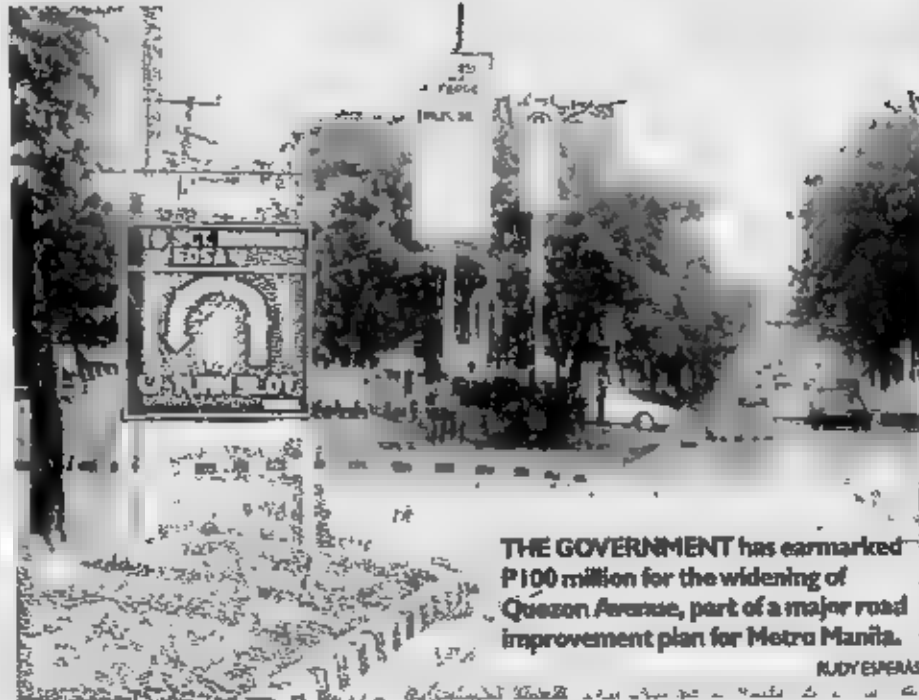
The P1.3 billion would be spent on the following: P400 million for the construction of the Ninoy Aquino International Airport Expressway and roads leading to it; P342 million for the widening and

concreting of R-10, from C-2 to Zaragoza Street in Manila, including right-of-way; P220 million for the widening and concreting of Commonwealth Avenue in Quezon City;

P100 million for the widening of Quezon Avenue in Quezon City; P100 million for the construction of the C-5 Extension, from the South Luzon Expressway to Sucat in Parañaque City;

P95 million for right-of-way in Mindanao Avenue, Quezon City; P30 million for the opening and concreting of the Taguig City Diversion Road; P30 million for the concreting of Congressional Avenue Extension, Quezon City; and P22 million for right-of-way for the C-5/Boni Serrano Avenue Interchange, also in Quezon City.

Gullas said that the P1.3 billion was part of the P126.7-billion public infrastructure spending program contained in the 2006 national budget that the House had passed last month.



THE GOVERNMENT has earmarked P100 million for the widening of Quezon Avenue, part of a major road improvement plan for Metro Manila.

METROBRIEFS

Gas station robbed

FIVE men riding on motorcycles robbed a gasoline station in Sta. Ana, Manila of its earnings on Monday afternoon. Supt. Eduardo Tan Sierra Jr. said the unidentified robbers all clad in shorts, posed as customers of the Petron gas station on Tejeron Street. Two of them later took out guns and robbed pump attendant Jocelyn Viray of her Nokia 3210 cell phone. They also took P2,000 in cash from cashier Elvira Lanza. Another robber went to cashier's booth and forced Shirley Mata to hand over the gas station's earnings of P40,000. The five men then fled toward Pandacan on board their motorcycles, Sierra said.

Maithe Montayre, trainee

Moment of truth

FOR almost a year he had heard the testimonies against him and presented his own witnesses to clear his name. Next month, actor and former Quezon City Rep. Dennis Roldan will know whether or not he will be allowed to post bail for the kidnapping charges filed against him. Pasig City Regional Trial Court Branch 261 Judge Agnes Reyes-Carpio yesterday ordered the defense and the prosecution to submit their exhibits and memorandum to justify and block Roldan's application for bail. She is expected to resolve the application in a month. Roldan, who has been accused of masterminding the kidnapping of a three-year-old Chinese-Filipino boy in February 2005, applied for bail as soon as the case against him was filed in March 2005. Kidnapping is a non-bailable offense, but Roldan claimed the evidence against him was weak.

Edson C. Tandang Jr.

P100,000 reward

PHILIPPINE National Police chief Arturo Lomibao has offered a P100,000 reward to anyone who can provide information that would lead to the arrest of the man who killed a businessman in Navotas two weeks ago. Edgardo Dilon, who sold engine and spare parts for ships, was shot dead by a lone suspect near his shop in Daanghara Street. His daughter, Sherry Anne, said Lomibao made the offer when he went to her father's wake last week. "Until now, we still don't know who could have done it," she told the INQUIRER.

Nancy C. Carvajal

Ex-cop nabbed for taking bribes to protect illegal betting

By Margaux C. Ortiz

A FORMER MANILA POLICEMAN was arrested by National Bureau of Investigation agents last Saturday for distributing bribe money weekly to different police stations in Metro Manila to protect illegal horse race betting activities.

Onofre Reyes, who retired from the Manila Police District in 1998, now faces charges for violation of Republic Act 9287, or an act increasing the penalties for those found to be involved in illegal number games.

NBI Special Task Force (STF) chief Reynaldo Esmeralda said his division conducted surveillance operations last Saturday after receiving information about Reyes' illegal activities.

Esmeralda added that around 3 p.m., the agents saw the suspect on B Guevarra Street in Sta. Cruz, giving a brown envelope to an unidentified man whom the police said was a bribe

collector.

The agents then arrested Reyes while the other man was able to escape.

Seized from Reyes were six brown envelopes containing P1,000 to P1,500 each and a list of at least 49 police stations and the names of police officers in Manila, Taguig, Caloocan, Quezon City and Navotas to whom the alleged bribes were to be given, Esmeralda said.

The NBI official added that Reyes had stapled P200 on the envelopes for the collectors and runners.

Reyes, who is now detained at the NBI, was subjected to inquest proceedings in the Manila City Prosecutor's Office last Sunday.

The NBI had arrested and charged 71 suspects, including gambling employees, bookies and bettors, last month for their alleged involvement in unauthorized betting on horse races.

SLEx toll rates to go up on May 15; Skyway spared

By Daxim L. Lucas

TRAVEL FROM MANILA TO THE southern part of Luzon will cost more starting next week once the Philippine National Construction Corp. raises its toll rates for the South Luzon Expressway.

In a telephone interview, PNCC corporate communications head Charito Chavez said that the toll hike will take effect on May 15 after the company earlier decided to adjust its rates according to the cap approved by regulators.

However, the increase will only be implemented from the Alabang to Calamba, Laguna stretch of the SLEx.

The elevated Skyway from Makati to Bicutan and the stretch of the South Superhighway from Makati to Alabang will be spared from the hike, Chavez said.

Starting Monday, light vehicles or so-called "Class 1" vehicles using the Alabang-Calamba stretch will have to pay P27, representing a P6 increase from the

present rate of P21.

Mid-sized vehicles or those classified as "Class 2" must pay P53, or an increase of P12 from the present rate of P41.

Heavy vehicles or those classified as "Class 3" modes of transportation must pay P80, representing a hike of P18 from the present rate of P62.

Corresponding adjustments will also be made for shorter trips along the stretch of the SLEx.

On a per kilometer basis, rates will increase by 29 percent or 93 centavos, compared to the present rate of 72 centavos per kilometer for Class 1 vehicles.

Class 2 vehicles will pay P1.86 per kilometer from P1.44 per kilometer, while Class 3 vehicles will pay P2.80 per kilometer from the existing 2.17 per kilometer.

Chavez said no approval is needed from the Toll Regulatory Board since the company is allowed to adjust its fees under Presidential Decree 1894.

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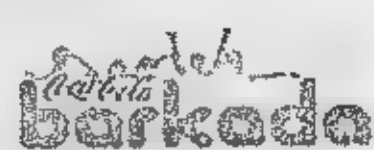
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 - for Community-based, Out-of-School or Working Youth Organizations, a certification from the LGU/barangay or gov't agency
- A one-page short profile of the organization featuring a brief description, its nature and background, programs and track record
- A three-page profile of the Project Entry, featuring a brief but descriptive account or narrative that will illustrate the program/project.
- 3-page project documentation (photos, testimonies of partners or beneficiaries, certificates, etc.)

- Organizations shall be judged on the basis of a recent program or project that made an impact on the community and which best reflects the efforts of young people as partners in nation-building.
- A continuing project entry (or one that started in 2005) must either be completed, or a major portion must have been undertaken by the deadline.
- Registration in the NYC's Youth Organization Registration Program (YORP) is mandatory; registration papers may be submitted together with the project entry.
- Recipients of other awards are eligible.
- Previous TAYO winners and finalists may still participate, provided they submit a project entry different from the one submitted in the preceding search.
- All decisions of the TAYO Screening Committee and Panel of Judges are final.
- All materials submitted to the TAYO Secretariat automatically become property of the organizers.

SEARCH CRITERIA

- **IMPACT** of the Project Entry to the community (improvement in literacy, sanitation, health, income, etc.)
- **SOCIAL MOBILIZATION** (involvement of the community, especially the youth in planning, implementing and evaluating the program or project)
- **INNOVATIVENESS** (introduction/application of new technologies, uniqueness of services or products, promotion of unique or indigenous ways or materials)
- **SUSTAINABILITY AND PROBABILITY OF DUPLICATION**

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You may also get in touch with the TAYO Secretariat
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c/o the National Youth Commission
4/F Bookman Building, 979 Quezon Avenue, Quezon City

Palestinian Authority in danger of collapse, says World Bank

JERUSALEM—THE DONOR-STARVED Palestinian Authority may cease to function if government employees continue to go without salaries for much longer, the World Bank warned on Monday.

Civil servants will simply down tools and discipline in the ranks of the security services could well collapse if pay cheques, which have not arrived for the last two months, are not forthcoming, the Washington-based body said.

The European Union and United States have both frozen aid payments to the Palestinian Authority since the radical Islamist movement Hamas took power over its refusal to renounce the use of violence or accept Israel's right to exist.

Israel has also stopped handing over customs duties it used to collect on behalf of the Palestinian Authority, worth around 60 million dollars a month.

Although Muslim countries have pledged tens of millions in a bid to plug the gap, the funds have yet to be transferred with banks wary of falling foul of international laws that prohibit the financing of terrorist organizations. Hamas appears on US and EU terror blacklists.

A previous report by the World Bank last month had warned that the Palestinian economy would experience a dramatic decline with incomes decreasing by 30 percent and unem-

ployment doubling by the end of the year.

But even those dire projections "now appear too rosy," the new survey said.

"If the PA (Palestinian Authority) remains unpaid/minimally paid for several months, it may cease to function," the report said.

Institutional breakdown could undermine years of good work in a matter of weeks and prove extremely hard to rectify.

"Complex structures such as school systems are not machines to be switched on and off at will," the report said.

"A protracted period in which the PA is disabled might result in the unraveling of a dozen years of donor efforts to build the responsible, accountable institutions needed for a future Palestinian state or for continued governance." The World Bank said there was already evidence the security forces were prepared to take the law into their own hands in order to force the authorities to hand over cash.

"Non-payment, part-payment or unequal payment of salaries could precipitate breakdowns in force discipline in the security services," said the report.

"A deteriorating security environment could make it difficult for government, commerce and relief efforts alike to operate properly." The report reiterated warnings from the UN and aid organizations that a humanitarian crisis

loomed in the Palestinian territories.

It said food and gasoline shortages are already emerging in Gaza as a result of prolonged Israeli enforced border closings.

With more than 160,000 on the government payroll, one in three Palestinians are dependent on state salaries.

"We agree with the World Bank," said Palestinian planning minister Samir Abu Elsheh told AFP. "If we don't get money soon we face a real disaster." Palestinian Authority president Mahmoud Abbas also called for the resumption of aid to the government in a letter Monday to the Middle East quartet which comprises Russia, the United Nations, United States and European Union.

"The payment of aid and financial support for the Palestinian Authority should resume in order to avoid a real humanitarian crisis," the moderate Abbas was quoted as saying in letter.

Israel has called claims of a humanitarian disaster exaggerated but the World Bank said Israel risked becoming the target of Palestinian anger as the plight of citizens in the West Bank and Gaza became ever harder.

"The dominant popular response to intense economic pressure in 2001-2 was anger at Israel as the perceived agent of economic distress not rejection of the violence that Israel was acting to prevent," it said.

AFP



RO HAN DIN

Wearing handcuffs and chains, David Blaine fails to break the world record for being submerged in water for 9 minutes. He lasted only 7 minutes, 8 seconds.

AP

Blair hints at mid-2007 exit

LONDON—BRITISH PRIME MINISTER Tony Blair has broadly hinted at his intention to stand down within the coming year, as his troubled Labour government sinks to fresh lows in the opinion polls.

Speaking after one of the most bruising few weeks of his nine years in power, Blair, who turned 53 on the weekend, rejected a growing cacophony of calls for him to name the day that he intends to resign.

To do so, he told a press conference Monday, would "paralyze the proper workings of government... and therefore damage the country." "The public are the boss. If we are not careful and don't get on with the business of governing, we will lose them," he said.

But in a significant turn, Blair signaled that he was retreating from his previously declared intention of completing "a full third term"—in other words, staying in Downing Street until the next election due by May 2010.

He said his plan now is to ensure "a stable and orderly transition" to a new prime minister—almost certainly Chancellor of the Exchequer Gordon Brown—"with the time plainly needed for my successor to establish himself." Later Monday, in a closed-door meeting with Labour members of parliament, Blair reportedly declared that he would give his successor "ample" time to settle in.

His language led political commentators to conclude that Blair now is preparing to step aside sometime in the middle of 2007, so long as rebels within Labour do not suc-



BLAIR

REUTERS

ceed in pushing him out before then.

Blair steered Labour to an unprecedented third straight general election victory a year ago, but since then his government has been dragged down by a string of highly embarrassing furores.

Fresh evidence that the public mood is turning hostile came in an opinion poll Tuesday in the Times newspaper that put support for Labour at just 30 percent—its lowest point since 1992, when the party was in opposition.

The main opposition Conservatives enjoyed an eight-point lead, while the smaller Liberal Democrats had 20 percent, according to the poll conducted by Populus after a whole-sale cabinet reshuffle Friday.

AFP

Study: Most newborn deaths happen in first 24 hours in developing world

HANOI—A BABY BORN IN THE DEVELOPING world must fight to survive right from the start, with up to 2 million deaths occurring in the first 24 hours of life every year, according to a global report on mother and infant mortality.

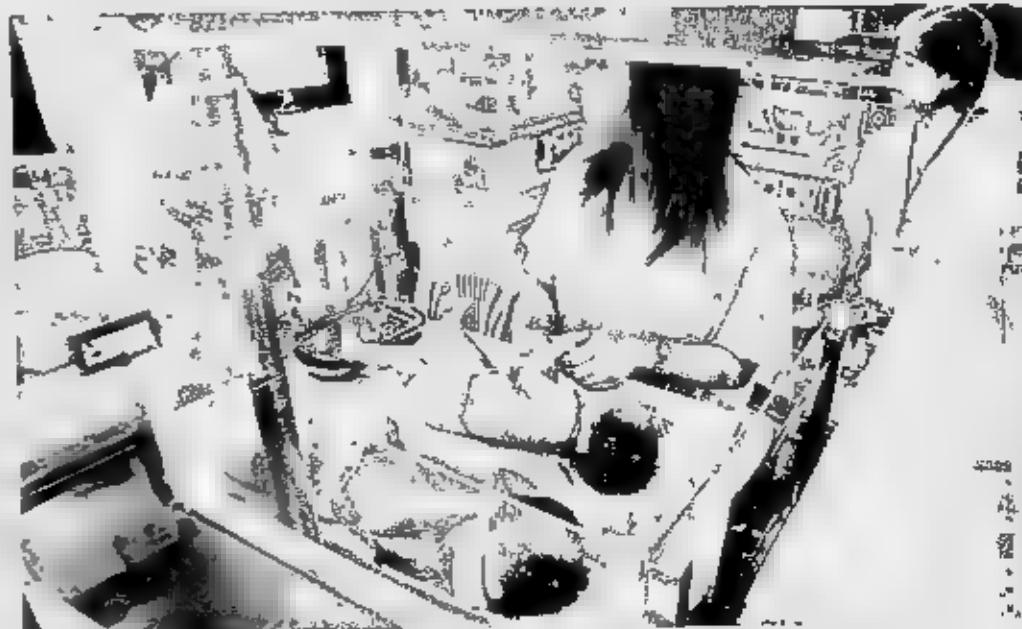
Many of those deaths could easily be prevented with cheap interventions, such as knit caps to keep newborns warm or clean blades to cut umbilical cords, according to the analysis released Tuesday by the US-based group, Save the Children.

Expectant mothers also do not fare well in poor countries, with half a million women dying annually from complications during pregnancy or birth often because they have no care before, during or after their babies are born, the report said. A huge number of women give birth at home alone or with no skilled attendant.

"In most of the developing world, childbirth is a dance with death for both mother and baby, even though 70 percent of those deaths could be prevented," said co-author Anne Tinker, director of the organization's Saving Newborn Lives Initiative. "The secret is really knowledge."

The 50-page report released ahead of Mother's Day compiles data from the world's nations as well as the World Health Organization and Unicef. It presents a bleak look at the challenges pregnant women and newborns face in impoverished countries, where up to 99 percent of deaths occur—illustrating the wide gap between rich and poor nations.

For instance, 1 in every 5 women in sub-Saharan Africa has lost a newborn, along with 1 in every 7 women in South Asia. Some 4 million babies die in their first month of life each year—the total number born annually in the



VIETNAMESE nurses care for newborn babies treated at the Vien Nhi pediatrics hospital in Hanoi April 28.

AP

United States.

Out of 78 low- and middle-income countries examined, Liberia had the highest newborn mortality rate with 65 out of 1,000 babies dying in a country where forced teen marriages are common and one out of 16 women dies during pregnancy or childbirth.

Liberia was closely followed by Afghanistan, Sierra Leone, Iraq, Pakistan and Ivory Coast—countries known for conflict and widespread violence against women.

In the Afghan village of Rabat north of Kabul,

a woman explained that her seventh child, a daughter, died just 14 days after birth two months ago.

"I am not sure why she died, but she was not able to breast-feed and I was not receiving prenatal medical care," said Nagis, who uses just one name. Like all of her children, the baby was delivered at home because there was no female doctor or midwife to aid her at the clinic.

"It is generally considered as taboo in the community for men to treat women, especially during pregnancy," she said.

AP

Two dim dwarf galaxies found around Milky Way

WASHINGTON—TWO DIM dwarf galaxies are the Milky Way's newest-known galactic companions, astronomers studying a vast swath of the sky reported on Monday.

This brings the total number of dwarf galaxies in the Milky Way's cosmic neighborhood to 14. But theorists believe there could conceivably be hundreds more.

The two newly detected dwarfs were found in the direction of the constellations Canes Venatici (the hunting dogs) and Bootes (the herdsman), scientists studying the Sloan Digital Sky Survey said in a statement. The little galaxy found in Canes Venatici is about 640,000 light-years from the Sun, a stone's throw in cosmic terms. A light-year is about 10 trillion km, the distance light travels in a year. The dwarf found in Bootes is about the same distance from the Sun.

Even though they are close, these galaxies were hard to spot because they were so dim, a defining characteristic of dwarf galaxies. The new galaxy in Bootes is the faintest discovered, with a total luminosity of 100,000 Suns.

Some astronomers theorize that there should be hundreds of clumps of so-called cold dark matter—slow-moving subatomic particles left over from the earliest period of the universe—orbiting the Milky Way, which contains Earth.

Each of these clumps should be massive enough to host a dwarf galaxy, but so far only 14 have been found.

Reuters



THE ENLIGHTENED ONES

Newly ordained Buddhist monks pray at a ceremony marking their entry into priesthood at the village of Polgahawela in the north-western part of the island, May 8.

AFP

South Africa's ex-deputy president cleared of rape

JOHANNESBURG—SOUTH AFRICA'S FORMER deputy president Jacob Zuma was acquitted of rape on Monday in a verdict that capped the country's most sensational trial since the end of apartheid.

"The accused is found not guilty," said Judge Willem van der Merwe as thousands of supporters broke out in loud cheers and ululation outside the Johannesburg high court.

Once the frontrunner to succeed President Thabo Mbeki, Zuma had maintained that he had consensual sex with a 31-year-old woman HIV-positive woman, the daughter of a family friend, at his Johannesburg home in November.

"In my judgment, the state has not proved the accused's guilt beyond a reasonable doubt," said the judge.

Zuma rose from his seat after hearing the "not guilty" verdict and basked in the applause from his supporters in the courtroom before turning to hug his lawyer Kemp J Kemp.

The "not guilty" verdict pulls Zuma from the brink of political oblivion, but it remains unclear



ZUMA

AFP

whether the veteran of the anti-apartheid struggle will be able to kick-start his presidential campaign. His troubles do not end with the acquittal. He is due to go on trial again in July for corruption in a case that led to his dismissal as deputy president last year.

After the verdict, 54-year-old Zuma emerged victorious at a downtown Johannesburg square to address his supporters in his native Zulu language and lead them in his signature liberation-era song "Mshiniwami," or "Bring Me My Machinegun." "I love you as people, as you love me. I would like to thank you for showing your support with me today," said Zuma, accompanied by his daughter Duduzile who testified on his behalf during the trial.

AFP

Beatles lose court battle over Apple trademark

LONDON—THE BEATLES' MULTIMEDIA corporation lost its British High Court battle with Apple Computer on Monday, leaving the US group free to continue using the apple name and logo on its revolutionary iTunes music store website.

The Beatles' Apple Corps lost its claim for financial damages and court orders to stop Apple Computer using the "apple" marks in connection with the website that allows iPod users to download and save thousands of songs.

Apple Corps—owned by former Beatles Paul McCartney, Ringo Starr and the

widows of bandmates John Lennon and George Harrison—had accused the US company of breaching an agreement between the firms by promoting music products on the Internet. Apple Computer is the market leader for music downloads, with around three million songs being downloaded each day from its iTunes service.

The verdict could cost Apple Corps more than three million pounds (\$5.6 million) once all legal bills have been finalized.

On Monday, it agreed to pay Apple

Computer's costs, so far estimated at about two million pounds. Judge Edward Mann, a self-confessed iPod owner, granted The Beatles' firm permission to appeal against his ruling. Following the verdict, Apple Computer's chief executive Steve Jobs invited 1960s stars The Beatles to join the iPod generation as their songs are not available on iTunes.

"We have always loved The Beatles, and hopefully we can now work together to get them on the iTunes Music Store," he said. Regarding the ruling, Apple Corps manager Neil Aspinall said: "With

great respect to the trial judge, we consider he has reached the wrong conclusion.

"We felt that during the course of the trial we clearly demonstrated just how extensively Apple Computer had broken the agreement. We will accordingly be filing an appeal," he added. The long-running spat dates back to the 1980s and the two companies reached a peace deal in 1991, under which Computer paid Corps \$26 million, which forbade each side entering the other's exclusive "field of use" of the Apple name.

AFP

The WORLD

Editor Luverne B. Gueco

Most Iranian exiles oppose military strike

LOS ANGELES—WITH NEON SIGNS in Persian decorating the window of the Woodland Hills Market—"Kabob" glowing in bright red, "Iranian Market" in pea green—this corner grocery store could just as well be in Tehran as in the heart of "Tehrangles," the name Iranians everywhere have given their largest exile community.

Products labeled in Persian and English reflect the dual identity of most customers, who find themselves particularly torn these days, wanting change in Iran but dreading what further sanctions or military action would do to Iranians.

"I love my country but I hate these mullahs," said Houshang Samandi, a television director for an Iranian satel-

lite channel whose life in Los Angeles remains so completely Iranian that after 14 years he still asks a fellow exile to translate the word "sanctions."

"Sanctions will only harm the ordinary people," Samandi said. "If there is a military attack, they will be killing my people. But if they don't attack, the mul-lahs will never leave." NYT News Service

Major powers fail to break impasse over Iran crisis

NEW YORK—MAJOR POWERS ENDED INTENSIVE TALKS LATE Monday with no agreement on a UN resolution to rein in Iran's controversial nuclear program and were unlikely to have a text ready this week, officials said.

They said discussions between US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and her counterparts from Russia, China, Britain, France, Germany and the European Union failed to resolve differences over how to deal with Tehran.

Britain's new foreign secretary Margaret Beckett, making her debut on the international scene, called the session at the Waldorf Hotel here an "important and difficult meeting." "Everyone believed Iran must give up its nuclear enrichment program," Beckett told reporters after the talks and a dinner. "Its the way to achieve that we have to agree (on)."

Participants said the ministers, who met for two hours without aides before going into dinner, agreed on the need to keep Iran from using its civilian nuclear program to develop atomic bombs. But a senior US official reported no progress in melting Russian and Chinese resistance to American calls for tough action under chapter seven of the UN charter, which would authorize sanctions or the use of force.

"There is not yet agreement on the tactics and what's most pronounced is that there is no agreement yet that this should be a chapter seven resolution," said the official, who spoke on condition of anonymity.

"Based on tonight's meeting, I would not expect a resolution to be voted on and adopted this week," the official said. "I think it's going to take a little bit more time." He said political directors of the UN Security Council's five permanent members and Germany would take up the thorny issue Tuesday and most likely hold another round of talks next week in Europe.

Russian news agencies quoted Moscow's top envoy, Sergei Lavrov, as calling for further negotiations, including more direct talks between major powers and Iran.

"There was general agreement on the need to create conditions for resuming direct negotiations on Iran's nuclear program," Interfax news agency quoted Lavrov as telling Russian reporters in New York.

France's chief diplomat Philippe Douste-Blazy said the ministers discussed "incentive and dissuasive measures according to the Iranian response" in the confrontation.

Among the incentives raised by the French minister were cooperation in civilian nuclear energy, increased commercial and technological ties and security guarantees that the United States has refused to provide.

Rice had earlier Monday billed the talks as "a time for the international community to come together and say with very great clarity it's time for Iran to accede to the demands of the international community." But her spokesperson Sean McCormack insisted the third ministerial meeting this year of the so-called P5 plus one was not designed to produce specific results.

"It was not intended as a discussion about the language on a resolution," McCormack said. "This was intended more as a strategic-level discussion about how to deal with various issues presented by Iran." He provided no details of the discussions among Rice, Lavrov, Beckett, Douste-Blazy, China's Li Zhaoxing, Germany's Frank-Walter Steinmeier and the European Union's Javier Solana.

Moussaoui wants new trial, withdraws his guilty plea

ALEXANDRIA, VIRGINIA—AL-QAIDA PLOT-
ter Zacarias Moussaoui made a desperate bid
Monday to get a new trial over the Sept. 11 at-
tacks conspiracy but a judge rejected his at-
tempt to withdraw his guilty plea.

Moussaoui made a quick-fire decision to change his plea one day after he was sentenced to life imprisonment without a possibility of release last Thursday.

The 37-year-old Frenchman said in an affidavit that he had lied to the court when he admitted involvement in planning the attacks.

But Judge Leonie Brinkema said federal law prevented a guilty plea being changed once a sentence has been imposed. "His motion is too late and must be denied on this basis alone," Brinkema said.

Moussaoui said in his affidavit that his testimony admitting a role in the Sept. 11 plot had been a "complete fabrication." He said he knew nothing of the plans for the attacks on New York and Washington which left almost 3,000 dead—but that he had lied to his trial because of his distrust of the American judicial system.

Moussaoui entered a guilty plea, in April 2005, to six charges of conspiring to carry out the attacks.

His lawyers said they were aware the law did not allow Moussaoui to change his plea, but said they filed the motion because of their "problematic relationship with Moussaoui, of which the court is well aware."

Moussaoui refused to cooperate with his lawyers throughout the two month trial and often cursed them.

Last Wednesday, the jury rejected execution but decided Moussaoui should be imprisoned for life with no chance of parole.

In formally pronouncing the sentence on Thursday, Brinkema warned Moussoui that he could not appeal the conviction.

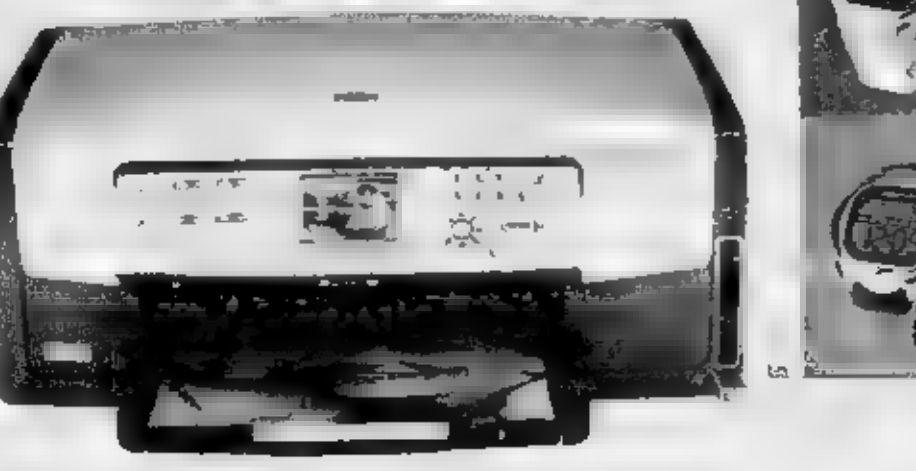
He does have the right to appeal the sentence, though Brinkema said at the time "I believe it would be an act of futility". Brinkema said Monday that Moussaoui could also appeal her latest decision against him.

Moussaoui's lawyers said he changed his mind about his plea while waiting to be transferred to a super-maximum security prison in Colorado.


"I was extremely surprised when the jury did not return a verdict of death because I knew that it was the intention of the American justice system to put me to death," Moussaoui said in his new statement. **AP**

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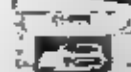
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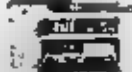
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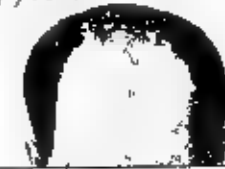
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NCR swimmers hit gold

By Marc Anthony Reyes

NAGA CITY (VIA BAYANTEL)—NATIONAL CAPITAL REGION launched its torpedoes on the pool yesterday, bringing down three gold medals highlighted by the record-breaking performance of Dorothy Grace Hong in Day 3 of the Palarong Pambansa at the Metro Naga Sports Complex.

Hong, 12, poised herself to duplicate if not surpass her double-gold feat in Iloilo last year, when she ruled the girls elementary 100-meter backstroke. She posted a time of one minute, 10.80 seconds to take the gold. She earlier reset the Palara record

in the heat with a 1:09.65 clocking.

Using her advanced underwater strokes to gain headway, the incoming freshman at the La Salle-Araneta in Malabon, who won the 100m and the 4x100 relay last year, erased the 1998 bench-

mark of Lina Dacanay (1:14.33) set in Bacolod City by almost five seconds.

Drawing inspiration from her performance were Maxim Christopher Quilaia, who dominated the secondary boys 100m back, and Gian Daniel Berno, who captured the gold in the elementary boys 200m freestyle for NCR.

Palarong Pambansa veteran Arza Roco, goaded by her fellow Bicolanas, produced the first golden triumph for the host region with a victory in the secondary girls javelin.

Roco expressed surprise over her 36.95-meter feat which she claimed far surpassed her personal best of 32 meters.

But she said she's happy to give Bicol its first gold in the meet being dominated by the National Capital Region.

NCR, the defending champion in secondary competitions, had a total of 10 golds in both divisions to lead the competitions, while Calabarzon and Mimaropa already have two apiece.

The Big City gymnasts continued to flash their grace at the University of Nueva Caceres gym with victories in elementary girls artistic team event. Their individual all-round bets also took three gold medals led by Amanda Alejandrino, Jiarca Teresa Aris and Anna Doroteo, who finished 1-2-3.

DEBBY Catabay of Region I executes her winning leap in the triple jump. **MIRIO** JESUS OBERTO, PDI SOUTHERN LUZON BUREAU

Express tackle Giants sans Ritualo

Games Today (Araneta Coliseum)
4:40 p.m.—Purefoods vs Air21
7:35 p.m.—Sta. Lucia vs San Miguel

By Musong R. Castillo

LESS THAN 48 HOURS AFTER LOSING its acclaimed leader, Air21 plunges into action today, not only needing to find a new cornerstone but also to chalk up a win that would prop up the Express' sagging fortunes in the PBA Philippine Cup.

After dealing gunslinger Ren-Ren Ritualo to Talk 'N Text, the Express clash with Purefoods at 4:40 p.m. in a game that could well determine who will step up in place of their former guard who more or less determined what little success

they had in the past.

Eighth in the nine-team field at 4-8, Air21 got seldom-used role player Leo Avenido and future draft rights in return, and team manager Lito Alvarez said that the Express would slowly become Nino (KG) Canaleta's team.

"The team owner wants to employ pressure defense all the way," Alvarez had told the Inquirer on Monday. "And Ritualo is a known scorer. The core of the team will now be Canaleta."

Ritualo will take his more-than-20-point-a-game average to the already formidable Phone Pals and the Express are left with no legitimate outside threat, or a player with the proven ability to light it up against any team in the league.



RITUALO: Now with Talk 'N Text

The Chunkee Giants will take to the Araneta Coliseum floor on a high, riding the momentum of a four-game winning streak capped by a victory on Friday that halted sister team San Miguel's year-best seven-game run.

Another victory for the Giants today will move the team closer toward clinching an outright semifinal spot, which coach Ryan Gregorio believes is just two wins away from where the team sits at the moment.

"Eleven wins should be enough to make the semis outright," Gregorio said. "Considering how the teams are bunched (in the bottom half), two more victories could give us an automatic seat in the Final Four."

San Miguel aims to keep in step with the Giants later, colliding with struggling Sta. Lucia in the 7:35 p.m. contest.

The Beermen slipped a bit last week but are still the logical picks over the Realtors, who have been in the doldrums all tournament long with a 3-8 record.

Davao booters prevail

SAN CARLOS CITY—Davao bounced back from a draw with an 11-0 thrashing of Masbate, while Cebu put itself in a strong position to advance into the knockout stage yesterday in the 1st PFF National Girls Under-17 Championships at the SJRI ballfields here.

Striker July Anne Bunac booted in five goals and Cherry Mae Vilchez produced a hat-trick for the Davaoenas, who were held to a 3-3 stalemate by Bukidnon Monday.

In the other Group A match, Cebu, drawing a goal each from team captain Gabrielle Mercado and Bea Maximo, moved closer to the semifinals with a 2-1 victory over Bukidnon.

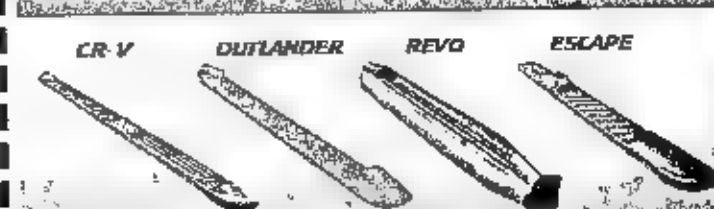
Mia Arenas fed the 16-year-old Mercado of Cebu International School, who was unmarked inside the box, and the skipper made no mistake rolling the ball between the legs of the Bukidnon keeper for the opening goal in the 15th minute.

The win hiked Cebu's output to six points in two matches with a six-goal difference, while Davao remained in second with four points and an 11 goal difference.

The two teams clash at 8 a.m. today for the top spot in Group A. **Cedelf R. Tupas, PDI Visayas Bureau**

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SPORTS

Chinese aces join RP Open

POWERHOUSE CHINA IS bringing in two of the world's top 10 players when it competes in the first Bingu Bonanza Philippine Open Badminton Championships presented by PLDT Business Solutions set May 24-28 at the PhilSports Arena.

Chen Hong, the world's No. 6 player in the men's singles, displays his class act before local fans and against an equally talented field as he spearheads the rack Chinese squad's bid in the \$120,000 tournament, a four-star tournament sanctioned by

the International Badminton Federation.

The power-hitting Chen, who humbled compatriot and world No. 1 Lin Dan in the final to capture the All-England Open crown last year, will be joined in the team by Bao Chunlai, ranked No. 7 in the world in the men's singles.

China, whose main squad led by Lin swept the recent Thomas and Uber Cups in Japan, is also parading the world's No. 7 team in the ladies doubles—Jing Du and Yang Yu—making it the

team to beat in the event sponsored by Bingu Bonanza, JVC, PLDT and Smart and organized by IMG.

Zhu Liu, Chen Lin and Wang Lin, ranked among the top 25 in the world, will carry China's bid in the women's singles while Sun Junjie and Xu Chen head the Chinese men's double team.

Also entered are Malaysia, Germany, Singapore, India, Canada, Indonesia, Hong Kong, Japan, Korea, Taiwan, England, Vietnam, Austria, Thailand, Finland and host Philippines.



CHEN

9-ball stakes P1 million

THE BRAGGING RIGHTS OF being the first official national champion and the P1 million that goes with it will be at stake in the Philippine 9-ball Championship on Aug. 4 to 19 at the Ninoy Aquino Stadium.

Sixty-four of the country's top cue artists are expected to battle it out in the event sanctioned and organized by the Billiards and Snooker Congress of the Philippines. BSCP officials announced yesterday at the PSA forum at the Pantalan Restau-

rant function room in Manila.

"This [is] the first time that the BSCP is conducting an official tournament to crown a national champion," said BSCP chair Yen Makabenta, who appeared in the session sponsored by the Manila Sports Council and Pagcor together with BSCP president Enrie Pajardo and secretary-general Julius Nidea.

"Before this, we only had exhibition tournaments organized by private promoters, and they were not truly representative and comprehensive," Makaben-

ta added in the public sports program sponsored by Pagcor and Manila Mayor Lito Atienza.

Pajardo said the event, which also serves as the country's dress rehearsal for the World Pool Championship, will send the champion and runner-up to the 2006 World Pool Championship that will be held at the Philippine International Convention Center in November. It also serves as one of the BSCP's criteria for inclusion to the national team to the Doha Asian Games in December.

TNT becomes La Salle team

IF THE RED BULL LINEUP IS DOMINATED by former Ateneo Blue Eagles, Talk 'N Text has just become its collegiate archrival.

"We have become a La Salle team," said TNT governor Ricky Vargas, an Ateneo alumnus, after the recent acquisition of former Green Archers RenRen Rivaldo and Don Allado, who have both previously played under coach Derrick Pumaren, himself a La Salle alumnus.

All told, there are six Greenies in the TNT squad now, to include MacMac Cardona, assistant coach Tonchi Yturi and Poch Jimeno who finished his elementary and high school studies at La Salle Greenhills.

Ironically, TNT's top bossman Manny V Pangilinan, is an Ateneo Alumnus and the chief financial backer of the Blue Eagles.

"Wala na kaming makuha from Ateneo, kasi kaniha nang lahat ng Red Bull," Ricky said in jest.

With the two new additions to the Phone Pals, Derrick feels his team is complete.

"Wala nang kulang. Kumpleto na," he said.

According to him the first day of practice with the two new Phone Pals was "very good."

"You can feel the excitement within the team and you can see the potential. We'll struggle at the start, *syempre*, because of the adjustments, but we'll be alright," Derrick said.

Three important messages were contained in a press release e-mailed to me by the BAP about a week ago: First, that the Fiba Central Board which met last March 31 in Hongkong, has thrown the MOU between the POC and Fiba Secgen Patrick Baumann in the trashbin.

Second, that the management of Philippine affairs in relation to Fiba will now be the responsibility of Fiba-Asia which will hold an election this June and not Baumann.

And Third, that the one and only way the Fiba suspension on the Philippines can be lifted is by reinstating the BAP in the POC.

Frankly, I've been puzzled. All has been very quiet lately on the BAP and POC fronts. Could this be the proverbial calm before another storm?

Reader Giovanni Nicolasoni, Customer Care Officer of BCI Asia Construction, begs to disagree with the observation of PBA marketing head Jack Ruby regarding the recently-concluded All-Star Weekend in Cagayan De Oro.

"The CDO All-Stars was very good, but it is not the best. There were many before it that were better," Giovanni said, citing at least four editions which were most memorable to him as a fan.

Giovanni has probably forgotten the exact dates and some places but he remembers the shining moments that occurred in past All-Star Games.

"The assist of Sonny Jaworski to teammate Mon Fernandez for the winning basket; the 50-point performance of the late Arnie Ruedes in Cebu; the looping layup of Kenneth Durendes at the buzzer; North team's victory over the Southern All-Stars in Ilocos Norte last year; these moments will burn in my memory forever," said Giovanni, also an avid fan and researcher of boxing.

According to him, the record 1,626 punches thrown by Mexican boxer Oscar Larios happened in a 12-round fight and not in one round.

"His hands are very busy atop the ring, even busier than Manuel Medina, who was beaten by Luisito Espinosa years ago in Japan to wrest the world featherweight title," Giovanni said.

Larios goes up against Manny Pacquiao this July in Manila.

IN HUDDLE



Beth Celis

Granny Goose trips Montaña

By Jasmine W. Payo

GRANNY GOOSE CERTAINLY REDEEMED ITSELF in grand fashion.

After getting swept by cellar-dwelling TeleTech, the Tortillos topped the league-leading Montaña Jewels, 88-73, in the PBL Unity Cup yesterday at the San Andres Gym.

"Our one-week preparation did us well," said Tortillos coach Robert Sison. "(Our losses to TeleTech were) because of immaturity, we still need that killer instinct."

Explosive off the bench, Alfie Grijaldo fired eight of his 18 points in the decisive stretch in the fourth period to help the Tortillos keep the fourth spot at 6-5.

Giving up its solo lead, Montaña fell into a tie for first place with Toyota Otis at 8-3.

Earlier, the Magnolia Spillers only needed Kelly Williams and Arwind Santos to put up their typical numbers to forge an 88-79 victory over the TeleTech Titans.

The Spillers, coming off rare back-to-back losses, recovered their rhythm with Williams scoring a game-high 26 points plus 13 rebounds.

More than improving Magnolia's record to 5-6, coach Roy Banal hopes last conference's champions have snapped out of their slump.

"I hope the team finally realized what it takes to win a ball game," said Banal.

While Magnolia revived its bid to advance into the next round, TeleTech's own quarterfinal chances just got slimmer after dropping to 2-9.

The scores:
First Game
MAGNOLIA 88—Williams 26, Santos 22, Valenzuela 10, Rizado 7, Chan 5, Co 4, Misoles 4, Alvarado 3, To 3, Barcelonero 2, Borromeo 2, Jones

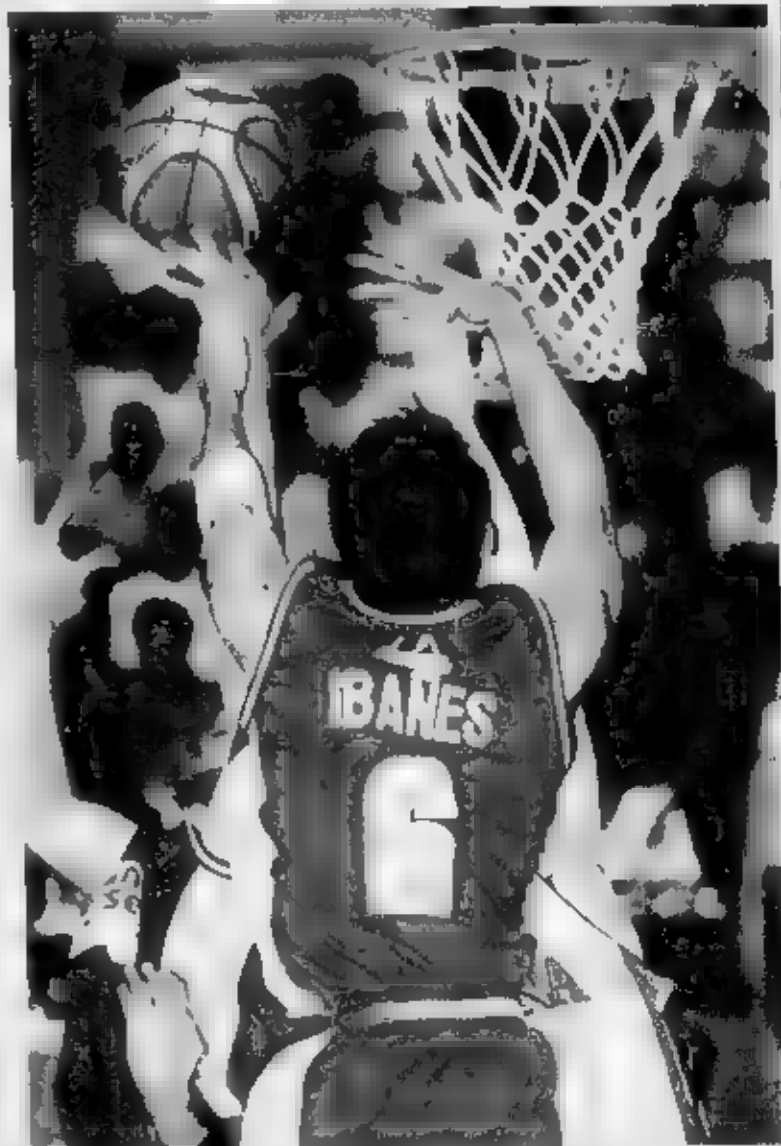
TELETECH 79—Capus 18, Latoriano 13, Gally 9, Dorado 8, Tang 7, Villamin 7, Duncal 6, Tolentino 5, Estrada 4, Mercado 2, Dilzon 0, Sierra 0, Magdadaro 0.

Quarters: 20-25, 44-42, 62-60, 88-79

GRANNY GOOSE 88—Grijaldo 18, Saldaña 15, Concha 12, Quifahan 8, Latorio 7, David 7, Cruz 6, Santos 6, Ibarra 4, Alabon 3, Ferrer 2, Alad 0, Oda Paria 0.

MONTAÑA 79—Magraya 15, Compton 14, Rodriguez 12, Vergara 7, Bonus 5, Dela Cuesta 5, Bagulon 4, Alablanco 4, Guerrero 3, Espiritu 2, Janilla 2, Evangelista 0, Bono 0.

Quarters: 20-22, 37-35, 59-56, 88-73



GRANNY Goose's Jireh Ibarra tries to control the boards. JIM GUNO/PANZAN

RP Open organizers racing to raise fund

By Jong Arcano

HAS THE PHILIPPINE OPEN GOLF CHAMPIONSHIP lost its charm?

Corporate support for the country's national championship is coming in trickles and organizers are racing against time to raise the needed money for the Open that returns to Wack Wack east on May 25-28.

"Getting the sponsors (for the Philippine Open) has become awfully difficult," Ramon Hocham of the Asian Tour's marketing group tasked to obtain around \$750,000

(about P39 million) for the event's total financial package told the *Inquirer* yesterday.

"It's been a real battle and it's quite amazing," said Hocham of the very slow pace of sponsorship confirmations.

Patrick Young of the Asian Tour is also planning in today to make a final evaluation of the finances. He is also expected to sign major deals today.

What would be first to go if the sponsorship expectations are not met is the planned live coverage of the Open by ESPN that would be beamed live to 266 million tele-

viewers all over the world.

Hocham, however, assured that the 90th staging of the Open is pushing through no matter what.

As this developed, one of the Open's top draws, Frankie Muñoz, remains undecided. His participation is being awaited to generate excitement more than the participation of the current stars of the Asian Tour.

Angelo Que, who finished tied for seventh in last week's SK Telecom Open in Korea, has entered to head the campaign of the local pros in a tournament that is ex-

pected to offer about \$200,000 in prize money.

Que is one of 13 tournament winners of the Asian Tour in the roster and one of 40 Filipinos already confirmed. These includes rookie pro Juvic Pagunsan, Jerome Delararte, Gerald Rosales, Danny Zarate, the top 20 pros in the Order of Merit, 10 qualifiers and six sponsored players.

Adam Le Vesconte, the 2005 winner at Mt. Malarayat, and Canadian Rick Gibson, also a former Open champ now residing in the country, are among the foreign entries.

Abdon, Uy gain top slots

JOHN KIER ABDON and Cebu-based Kathleen Uy scored a 75 and 77, respectively, to emerge as the top qualifiers in Class A at the start yesterday of the DHL-WWW/Express national age-group championships at the Villamor Golf Club course.

The vastly improved Abdon finished the 18-hole stroke play three shots clear of Gino Buniy and Jae Yang on a day when pre-tournament favorite Mike Yee stumbled with an 82 and wound up as the seventh seed.

Uy was two strokes ahead of Beverly Mendoza in the girls side and will be facing No. 4 Kristina Leonen in today's match play phase of the tourney organized by the Junior Golf Foundation of the Philippines and the National Golf Association of the Philippines.

In Class B, Chepe Delay's 79 allowed him to grab the top seeding from Marcel Puyat who made an 81.



EDGAR See, Peter Kawsak, Isaac Go and Mike De Joya finished 3rd Runner-Up in the Ford National Team Shootout Eliminations in Tagaytay Highlands.

Ford slates 3 satellite finals

HOSTILITIES HEAT UP IN THE FORD NATIONAL Team Shootout starting Thursday when the Satellite finals for Luzon North, Luzon South and Luzon East get going at different venues.

The Robert Trent Jones Sr.-designed Luisita Golf and Country Club plays host to the Luzon North Satellite finals on May 11 with the teams from Camp John Hay, Mimosa, Royal Northwoods and the hosts vying for three berths in the Grand Finals.

The Luzon South Satellite tees off the next day at the Mt. Malarayat Golf and Country Club involving teams from Malarayat, Tagaytay Highlands, Sta. Elena and Canlubang.

Wack Wack Golf and Country Club's fabled East course, site of this year's Philippine Open, tees the

finalists in the Luzon East Satellite on Saturday with teams from Alabang, Eastridge, Forest Hills, Manila Golf, Valley Golf and the host club disputing the section's Grand Finals berth.

The tournament, which lured about 2,200 players from all over the country, is a modified four-man scramble for teams from the Federation Golf Clubs with a total minimum handicap of 50.

"It's a fun format to play and was designed with the average golfer in mind," said Swing Magazine associate editor Mike Besa. "After all, how often do these golfers get a chance to represent their club in a national tournament?"

The top three teams from each Satellite will advance to the two-day Grand Finals slated May 25-26 at The Orchard and Sta. Elena, respectively.

Tuason comes up big in Formula 3

DESPITE SHORT PREPARATION, JP Tuason of Tuason Racing School came up with a big haul Sunday in the kickoff leg of the 2006 Asian Formula Three at the Batangas Racing Circuit.

Tuason bagged two runners-up

and one champion trophies in the Promotional class against a talented field of 14 drivers.

He only learned that he'd be racing a week before the event. His engine arrived Monday and only tested it before the time trials.

Moreover, on the same race weekend, he also had to supervise the TRS Ford Focus Celebrity and Media Cup final round, which he organized.

"It was like a tension-filled weekend," said JP, a former Karate of the Year who's supported by Ford, Ad-

dict, PCSO, Bosch, Petron, Ultrat, Standard Insurance, Goodyear, Red Horse, Oakley, H&R, K&N, Philippine Star, Qi Magazine, AFS, Roti, Starbrights, Sikkers, Manila Speed end," said JP, a former Karate of the Year who's supported by Ford, Ad-

dict, PCSO, Bosch, Petron, Ultrat, Standard Insurance, Goodyear, Red Horse, Oakley, H&R, K&N, Philippine Star, Qi Magazine, AFS, Roti, Starbrights, Sikkers, Manila Speed end," said JP, a former Karate of the Year who's supported by Ford, Ad-

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Potential trouble at the top

WHO ARE THE ENTERTAINMENT world's top stars? This year's front runners are Tom Cruise, Tom Hanks and Jim Carey—in that order. Therein lie several instructive tales:

Cruise is on top due to his solid reputation as a reliable filmmaker. After "War of the Worlds" made mega-millions, he's now following it up with his latest blockbuster, "Mission: Impossible III," which is similarly expected to break the bank.

Aside from his box-office clout, Cruise is also very much in the news due to his love life, his occasional "strange" behavior on TV (jumping excitedly on Oprah

VIEWFINDER

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seriously colorful public persona.

For his part, Tom Hanks doesn't jump up and down on couches and romance women young enough to be his daughters, but he, too, is a consistent filmmaker. In addition, he's an award-winner, has dabbled in directing, and is an industry leader. That's why he's No. 2.

These days, however, Hanks' non-controversial image is changing, due to his involvement as lead star in the "combustible" film, "The Da Vinci Code," which opens later this month.

The film is so controversial that even Hanks' "good guy" persona could be in for some rather fierce criticism—and even some *ad hominem* assaults.

Some people want to know: Why is he "lending" his good name to such a "hot" and potentially disturbing and even off-putting movie? Doesn't Hanks realize that, by agreeing to be associated with the film, he's lending credence to its speculative "attacks" against Christianity?

his reputation can withstand the blows. In fact, the controversy could even add to its cachet (Hanks "dares" to be non-conformist for a change, etc.).

But, if the majority of viewers see the actual film as an unlightened "attack" on Christianity, even "good" Tom Hanks

BO Bice



could be caught in the cinematic tsunami's deadly undertow.

And, where is Jim Carey in all this? Comfortably in the No. 3 slot, with no controversy or looming disaster to ruffle his feathers or run his day. Lucky guy!

Village people

THE VILLAGE People, the novelty disco band of the 1970s, is back with a remastered album of its most popular tunes. The album, "We Want You," contains 17 tracks, including four remixes of "In the Navy," "Go West," "YMCA" and "We Want You."

Bo Bice

"AMERICAN Idol" runner-up Bo Bice has released his debut album, "The Real Thing," produced by Clive Davis. The album teams Bo with Chad Kroeger (of Nickelback), Richie Sambora, Jon Bon Jovi, Ben Moody, John Shanks, Marti Frederiksen and Swedish producer Max Martin. Cuts include "Nothing Without You," "Hold On To Me," "You're Everything" and "My World." Bo shares writing credits on "It's My Life" and "Valley of Angels."



TOM Hanks

Winfrey's couch, etc.), and his penchant for getting into very public arguments.

For instance, he "lectured" "Today" show host Matt Lauer on psychology and criticized Brooke Shields for taking anti-depressant medication. Shields promptly lashed back at Cruise, and women viewers generally sided with her.

This made some Hollywood insiders fear that female viewers might boycott Cruise's latest starrer. If "Mission" is a big hit, that would debunk such fears, how-

ever. Incidentally, some female viewers are also said to be "down" on Cruise because of what they feel is his way of making his much younger love, Katie Holmes, so "dependent" on him.

That's subject to different interpretations, of course, and his current film's box-office grosses in the next couple of weeks should objectively affirm or contradict that view, at least as far as its dollar-and-cents repercussions go.

But the main point is clear: Tom Cruise rules because of his media-genic combination of box-office clout and as-



JIM Carey

The furor over the movie—and Hanks' involvement in it—is expected to heat up even more as its opening day looms. Only the nature and quality of the film itself can settle the score, one way or the other. So, come May 19, we'll know.

And, where does Hanks hope to be, after all this? If the movie passes muster,

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Cinema 3* - 12:30 PM, 2:40, 4:45, 6:50, 9:10	Cinema 4** - 12:30 PM, 2:40, 4:45, 6:50, 9:10
Cinema 5 - 1:30 PM, 3:45, 5:50, 8:15, 10:30	Cinema 9* - 2:30 PM, 4:45, 6:50, 9:15, 11:30
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Cinema 2 - 12:30 PM, 2:40, 4:45, 6:50, 9:10	Cinema 3 - 11:30 AM, 2:30 PM, 4:40, 6:50, 9:10, 11:30
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GB3	1 MISSION IMPOSSIBLE 3	2 POSEIDON	3 MISSION IMPOSSIBLE 3	4 POSEIDON	
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Alex Chan Lim
April 29
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GREENBELT AyalaMalls

Fisherman's son is new ...

From page A2-1

Gerald explained in Filipino.

He's keeping the car

He said the money was also a windfall for his parents, who are struggling to raise four children on a survival income.

Gerald said he would hang on to the car although he could sell it to buy a cheaper one.

"OK lang," he shrugged, when told that gasoline prices had risen to an all-time high.

The new "superstar" also downplayed Rosemarie's apparent protest over the results of the competition.

Rosemarie, 18, who represented the US in the search, had walked out of the show reportedly upon the instigation of her father, after she failed to make it as one of the top four. She did not participate in the production number of "Magsunula Ka" by the grand contenders, held before the announcement of the final face-off between Gerald and Acelele.

Battle of the Santoses

Dubbed as the ultimate battle of the Santoses, the face-off had Gerald and Acelele sing Danny Tan's original composition "Close To Where You Are." A break in the voice of Acelele during her performance apparently caused her the crown, even if she had been a heavy favorite of the show's followers.

During the road tours, Acelele showed superstar qualities and was named the Roadshow Superstar on Saturday for her performances in Marula, Cebu, Davao, Iloilo and Baguio.

For the face-off, the top two Santoses were judged for superstar quality (60 percent) and musicality (40 percent) by the jurors composed of director Floy Quintos, Danny Tan, Jaya, GMA executive Wilma Galvante and GMA Records president Felipe Yalong.

Ironically, "Close To Where You Are" was clearly written for a woman even if Tan claimed that the song was arranged in two keys to accommodate both male and female performers. In spite of a pitchy patch in her rendition, Acelele showed more passion in the song and delivered it with better diction than Gerald's unintelligible and lackluster performance.

But Gerald defended his victory: "There were judges out there who made the decision and they obviously thought I gave the best performance of the night."

Petrifying medley

It was the best performance except perhaps for the showdown between host Regine Velasquez and last year's winner Jonalyn Viray who belted their way to a petrifying medley of songs that tested their vocals with a surfeit of high notes.

"Dugan po kaming dalawa (It was bloody)," quipped Regine. "We were both wearing white so you could see the blood."

The show, which took more than six hours to tape, opened with Regine descending to the stage from the ceiling. Singing "I Believe I Can Fly," with the grand contenders of the show's first and second seasons, Regine, in a harness secured by invisible piano wires, floated on stage—a stunning production number.



NERVE-WRACKING moment for the final two: Gerald Santos and Acelele Santos
PHOTOS BY JUDY ESPERAS



HOST Regine Velasquez embraces last year's big winner Jonalyn Viray.



JUROR Jaya

Favorite song

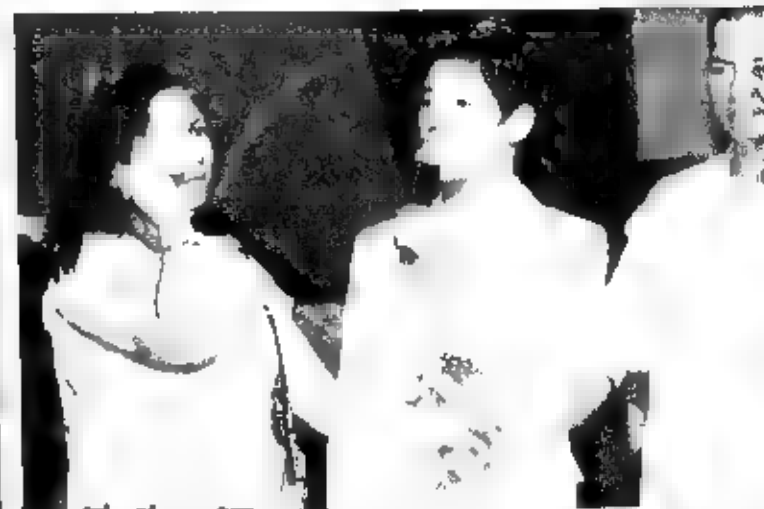
From among the seven grand contenders, the first to perform a favorite song was Rosemarie, who sang the soulful classic "Neither One Of Us" and received a score of 93 percent.

Next was Gerald, who sang "Kahit Isang Saglit," a Martin Nievera ballad, and got a score of 94 percent.

Acelele followed with her classy styling of Whitney Houston's "All The Men That I Need," and was given a score of 92 percent.

Denver Regencia, whose daring performance of an updated '70s Bee Gees song, "How Can You Mend A Broken Heart" showcased his faltering falsetto and earned for him 88 percent.

Ira Jammal Cerna performed next and got only 84 percent for his efforts.



Harry Santos' rendition of Josh Groban's "Fly Me Up" earned for him 90 percent.


While revealing the score of a contender given by one judge, Regine explained that the total score would come from the five judges. Thus tally brought the competition into the next level where only four contenders remained: Acelele, Gerald, Harry and Denver.

In the end, only one of the three Santoses prevailed and that was Gerald, the new Pinoy Pop Superstar.

THE NEW superstar Gerald shares his victory with tearful mom Maryann and dad Danilo.

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3 3:00M MISSION IMPOSSIBLE 3 PG-13	3 3:00M THE WILD	3 3:00M M. I. - 3
4 4:00M MISSION IMPOSSIBLE 3 PG-13	4 4:00M M. I. - 3	4 4:00M M. I. - 3
5 6:00M POSEIDON	5 6:00M POSEIDON	
6 8:00M POSEIDON	6 8:00M M. I. - 3	
7 10:00M POSEIDON	7 10:00M POSEIDON	
8 12:00M	8 12:00M	
9 12:00M SILENT HILL	9 12:00M SILENT HILL	
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3 3:00M POSEIDON	3 3:00M POSEIDON	3 3:00M SHE'S THE MAN
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2 2:00M M. I. - 3	2 2:00M SILENT HILL	2 2:00M M. I. - 3
3 3:00M THE WILD	3 3:00M SLITHER	3 3:00M POSEIDON
4 4:00M POSEIDON	4 4:00M RESERVED	4 4:00M SUBMERGED
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3 3:00M M. I. - 3	3 3:00M APOY SA DIBDIB NG SAMAR	3 3:00M WHEN A STRANGER CALLS
4 4:00M POSEIDON	4 4:00M APOY SA DIBDIB NG SAMAR	
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3 3:00M BANGKAS	3 3:00M SILENT HILL	3 3:00M BANDIDAS
4 4:00M APOY SA DIBDIB NG SAMAR	4 4:00M APOY SA DIBDIB NG SAMAR	4 4:00M TRISTAN & ISOLDE
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3 3:00M SILENT HILL	3 3:00M SILENT HILL	3 3:00M THE WILD
4 4:00M APOY SA DIBDIB NG SAMAR	4 4:00M APOY SA DIBDIB NG SAMAR	4 4:00M POSEIDON
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5 REINCARNATION	10 THE WILD

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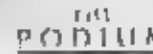


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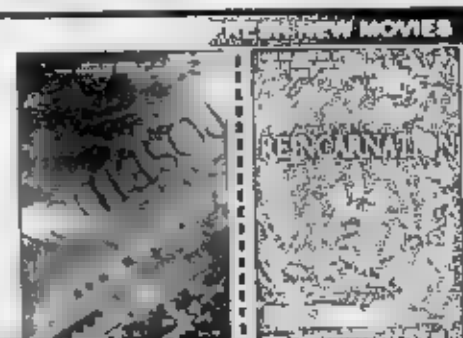
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WEDNESDAY, MAY 10, 2006

ENTERTAINMENT

A2-5

A disappointing 'Mission'

LOS ANGELES—FEWER PEOPLE chose to accept Tom Cruise's latest mission, a possible sign that the odd behavior of Hollywood's biggest star may have turned off viewers.

Paramount's "Mission: Impossible III" debuted with \$48.025 million, a solid opening yet well below industry expectations and almost \$10 million lower than the franchise's previous installment, according to studio estimates.

Industry analysts had expected the movie to open in the range of "Mission: Impossible II," which debuted with \$57.8 million in 2000, and Cruise's "War of the Worlds," which premiered with \$64.9 million last year.

Open book

Rob Moore, Paramount's head of worldwide marketing and distribution, said he did not believe Cruise's private life had any impact on "Mission: Impossible III," directed by "Lost" creator J.J. Abrams.

"I don't think so. There's no question it concerns us if the

press is writing about things other than the movie," Moore said. "If people are writing about his personal life, then by definition, they're not writing about the movie."

Cruise's antics in the past year or so, publicity over his romance with Katie Holmes and the tabloid blitz regarding their daughter Suri's birth in April may have left some moviegoers bamboozled or disenchanted with the actor.

Traditionally reserved about his private life, Cruise abruptly became an open book.

"Expectations were really high for this film. I think it's a good number, but people were obviously expecting better numbers," said Paul Dergarabedian, president of box-office tracker Exhibitor Relations. "There's a lot to be said for how a star's public persona can affect a movie's box office."

"Mission: Impossible III" earned generally favorable reviews, some critics calling it the best in the franchise and many offering high praise for Academy

Award winner Philip Seymour Hoffman, who plays Cruise's nemesis.

Along with potential Cruise backlash, the long six-year interval since "Mission: Impossible II" may have dulled audience appetites.

Worldwide total

Debuting in about 55 other countries, "Mission: Impossible III" took in \$70 million, for a worldwide total of \$118 million. Paramount noted that the new movie beat the \$115 million worldwide debut of "Mission: Impossible II" in those same countries.

Factoring in higher ticket prices, the debut for "Mission: Impossible III" looks worse. About 7.3 million people saw the new movie, compared with 10.7 million over the opening weekend for "Mission: Impossible II" and 10.3 million for "Mission: Impossible," which opened with \$45.4 million in 1996.

The weekend's other wide releases had fair to poor openings.

Freestyle Releasing's horror flick "An American Haunting" debuted at No. 3 with \$6.4 million.

New Line's family film "Hoot," adapted from Carl Hiaasen's novel about teenagers trying to save endangered owls, flopped with \$3.4 million.

"Mission: Impossible III" led Hollywood to its seventh-straight weekend of rising revenues. The top 12 movies took in \$99.4 million, up 27 percent compared to the same weekend last year.

Here's the week's top 10:

1. "Mission: Impossible III," \$48.025 million
2. "RV," \$11.1 million
3. "An American Haunting," \$6.4 million
4. "Stick It," \$5.5 million
5. "United 93," \$5.2 million
6. "Ice Age: The Meltdown," \$4.9 million
7. "Silent Hill," \$3.9 million
8. "Scary Movie 4," \$3.8 million
9. "Akeelah and the Bee," \$3.4 million
9. "Hoot," \$3.4 million



TOM CRUISE in "Mission: Impossible III"

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MISSION IMPOSSIBLE 3	12:30, 2:20, 8:10, 9:10
PG-13	
MISSION IMPOSSIBLE 3	11:30, 2:15, 5:00, 8:00, 10:45
PG-13	
MISSION IMPOSSIBLE 3	1:30, 4:20, 7:10, 10:00
PG-13	
AQUAMARINE	1:05, 3:35, 6:05, 8:35, 11:00
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OPENING TODAY

Apoy sa Dibdib ng Kaaway

Stars Mark Lapid, Cristine Reyes, Elizabeth Oropesa, Roi Vinzon, Dick Israel, Jess Lapid Jr.

Directed by Jose Balagtas

Inspired by the tragic landslide in Southern Leyte, this action flick tells the story of a big-city policeman (Lapid) who returns to his sleepy provincial town, only to discover its forests ravaged by illegal loggers. He meets and falls for a nurse (Reyes), the daughter of the most corrupt logger in the area. Will love prevail for the star-crossed couple? Reyes says that the viewers, after watching the movie, will "be inspired to take care of the environment." This is the first team-up of Pampanga Governor Lapid and Starstruck finalist Reyes who are rumored to be "special friends." "He took good care of me during the shoot," Reyes says. The movie's premiere was held



in Catarman, Samar, last week

Poseidon

Stars Josh Lucas, Kurt Russell, Emmy Rossum, Richard Dreyfuss

Directed by Wolfgang Petersen

It's New Year's Eve and a 150-foot tidal wave capsizes a 20-story, 13-deck luxury cruise ship in the middle of the North Atlantic Ocean. A small band of survivors is led by a career gambler (Russell) to safety, through the confusing labyrinth of the upside-down ship. They learn to depend on each other to survive. Based on Paul Gallico's novel and the 1972 disaster flick "The Poseidon Adventure," this remake is directed by the same man behind "Das Boot" and "The Perfect Storm." Peter Travers of the Rolling Stone raves: "It may be cheese, but [it] lays out a mighty fine spread." Petersen hits the action button and never stops whaling on it. Travers' verdict: "You'll end up entertained if you forgive the clichés and let Petersen grab you with the visuals." Dan Goldwasser of Soundtrack.net opines that the "music features a blend of orchestral and electronic elements, lending the score a contemporary feel."

Reincarnation

Stars Nagisa Sugihara, Yaiji Kinoshita, Ikuro Matsumura, Yuka Morita

Directed by Takashi Shimizu

A film crew shoots in a hotel where 11 people were murdered. The horror movie's lead actress, however, starts seeing spirits—including a gloomy girl cradling a horrifying doll. The star soon discovers that there's a connection between the hotel massacre and a recent spate of disappearances in Tokyo. Directed by the same "master of macabre" behind "Ju-on" and "Marebito," this screamfest is described by MovieSear.com as a "mysterious thriller that explores the complicated relationship between past and present." According to Travis Crawford of the Philadelphia Film Festival web site: "Shimizu has delivered a surprisingly traditional, linear ghost story that may be his most accessible... and engaging." Russell Edwards of Variety cautions that "Horror fans may be disappointed by the low scare count, but what it lacks in frights, it makes up for with a well-realized yarn... Performances are solid, but the characters are too distant to relate to."



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5:20 / 7:05 / 7:40 / 9:25 / 10:00	THE WILD	MISSION IMPOSSIBLE 3	POSEIDON
		12:40 / 2:00 / 3:20 / 4:40	1:50 / 4:10 / 6:30 / 8:50
AQUAMARINE	SILENT HILL	6:00 / 7:20 / 8:40 / 10:00	ONLY P38 ADMISSION GLOBE PLATINUM P348 P37M
12:30 / 2:45 / 5:00 / 7:15 / 9:30	1:40 / 4:20 / 7:00 / 9:40		

MALL CINEMAS

POSEIDON	MISSION IMPOSSIBLE: 3	AQUAMARINE
12:10 / 2:15 / 4:20 / 6:25 / 8:30	2:25 / 3:05 / 5:45 / 8:25	
APPOY SA DIBDIB NG SAMAR	SLITHER	
	12:15 / 2:20 / 4:25 / 6:30 / 8:35	

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ENTERTAINMENT

Komiks invades the small screen

By Bayani San Diego Jr.

THEY WERE ONCE DISMISSED AS passé—as dead as the medium that produced them.

But now, komiks serials are enjoying a revival on television.

"Today's kids are not familiar with radio and komiks stories that were turned into big movies in the 1970s and 1980s by Seiko, Regal and Viva," said Socorro "Cory" Vidanes, ABS-CBN senior vice president for television production. "For them, these stories are new material. That's why they rate well."

Vidanes cited as example "Gulong ng Palad," a 1950s radio serial and 1970s TV soap opera, which the Lopez-owned network turned into a telenovela this year.

Vidanes added that "Komiks," ABS-CBN's Sat-

Sudsy serials are crying to make a comeback on TV. Question is, will they be a hit, here and abroad?



urday night show which debuted in February, was also very popular among viewers.

Deo Endrinal, ABS-CBN vice president for entertainment, recalled that "the concept for 'Komiks' was presented by the network's creative group late last year. Even though the komiks industry is down, it's still a very rich source of stories."

Among the serials that have been revived on "Komiks" are "Kamay ni Hilda," "Inday Bote," "Busang Itim," "Agua Bendita" and "Bunsong Kerubim."

The last one was particularly inspired because it starred the original "Kerubim," Matet de Leon—this time, playing the mother of the baby angel.

Not just nostalgia

Endrinal said that these komiks stories "connected with the audience, especially with the TFC (The Filipino Channel) subscribers, Filipinos who are based abroad."

"It's not only about nostalgia, but also about going back to basic storytelling after all those fantasy (fantasy-based soap) and reality shows," Vidanes said.

Endrinal reiterated that the network had acquired the komiks titles not from movie companies Viva, Seiko and Regal, but directly "from the original authors—like Nerissa Cabral, who wrote 'Bunsong Walang Ningning' for Filipino Komiks."

Cabral told *Inquirer* Entertainment that she wasn't bothered when ABS-CBN writers tinkered with her story.

"They only added a background story," Cabral pointed out. "In any case, they consulted me before making those changes. I'm actually very flexible. If I were stubborn, I wouldn't have sold the story to them in the first place."

She said that when her komiks novels were turned into movies in the 1980s by Viva, she only dealt with Mina Aragon.

"Our agreement was that they could only film it once," Cabral recalled. "Since I already brought millions to Viva, I don't think it would bother them if I resold the story to ABS-CBN now. After all, 'Bunsong' is my intellectual property."

Endrinal said that "Bunsong" was too big for the one-hour "Komiks" format, so it was turned into a *sinaserye* (movie-based soap) that would run for an entire season (three to four months), starting May 15.

"We have to come up with something bigger than the movie," Endrinal explained. "We added new characters and introduced new storylines."

The soap's leading man Ryan Agoncillo jestingly called it "Bunsong Walang Ningning Reloaded."

MTRCB PG-13 Children below 13 yrs. old will only be allowed if accompanied by a parent or adult.

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3 MISSION IMPOSSIBLE 3 MTRCB PG-13 12:00, 2:50, 5:40, 8:30 LMF

4 POSEIDON MTRCB PG-13 2:15, 4:30, 6:45, 9:00 LMF

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Channel	2:50PM	3:50PM	4:50PM	5:50PM	6:50PM	7:50PM	8:50PM	9:50PM	10:50PM	11:50PM	12:50PM
ABC 5	News	News	News	News	News	News	News	News	News	News	News
ABS-CBN 2	Kapamilya Cinema	Kapamilya Cinema	Kapamilya Cinema	Kapamilya Cinema	Kapamilya Cinema	Kapamilya Cinema	Kapamilya Cinema	Kapamilya Cinema	Kapamilya Cinema	Kapamilya Cinema	Kapamilya Cinema
A2M	CSI: Miami	CSI: Miami	CSI: Miami	CSI: Miami	CSI: Miami	CSI: Miami	CSI: Miami	CSI: Miami	CSI: Miami	CSI: Miami	CSI: Miami
Cartoon Network	Cartoon Network	Cartoon Network	Cartoon Network	Cartoon Network	Cartoon Network	Cartoon Network	Cartoon Network	Cartoon Network	Cartoon Network	Cartoon Network	Cartoon Network
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Crysis/Supermax	Crysis/Supermax	Crysis/Supermax	Crysis/Supermax	Crysis/Supermax	Crysis/Supermax	Crysis/Supermax	Crysis/Supermax	Crysis/Supermax	Crysis/Supermax	Crysis/Supermax	Crysis/Supermax
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FOXTROT



BY BILL AMEND A. LUPIN

BY JESS ABRERA



MARVIN



BY TOM ARMSTRONG

PUGAD BABOY



BY P.M. JUNIOR

BABY BLUES



BY JERRY SCOTT

MUTTS



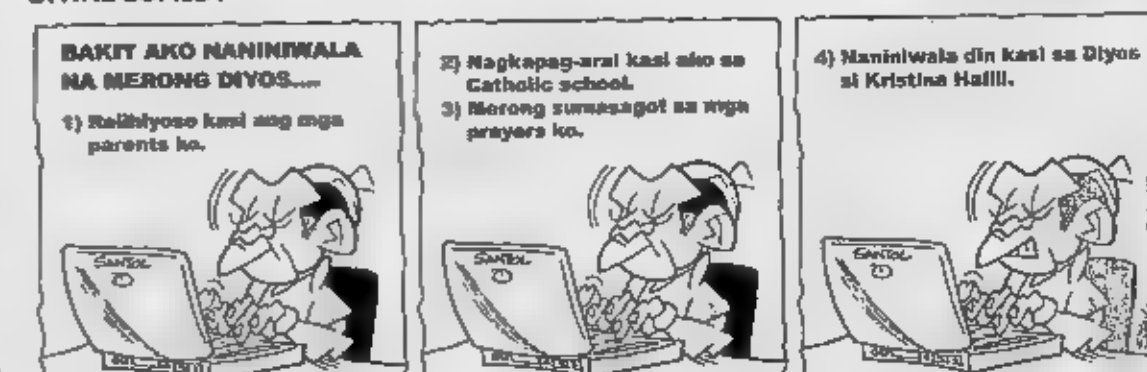
BY PATRICK McDONNELL

ATOMO AND WEBOY



BY LYRA GARCELLANO

DIVINE COMEDY



BY STEVEN PABALINAS

HOROSCOPE

BY FRANCIS DRAKE

YOU BORN TODAY: You need to be active! You're energetic and bold, and you have a positive frame of mind. Your intuition is excellent. You know how to teach and demonstrate things. Between ages 20 and 50, you're ready to explore the world. (You're keen to learn.) In later years, you want a comfortable home and cozy domestic world. Big changes are afoot this year.
Birthdate of: Paul "Bono" Hewson, musician; Fred Astaire, actor/dancer; Amanda Borden, Olympic gymnast.

ARIES (March 21 to April 19): Whatever others say today could be suspect. Take everything with a grain of salt. (Depending on your taste, you might also like a little ketchup on the side.)

GEMINI (May 21 to June 20): Disregard feelings of doubt and personal anxiety today. People might do or say things that confirm your worst fears about yourself. It's not true! It's just a funny thing happening today.

LEO (July 23 to Aug. 22): If you feel that bosses, parents and authority figures misunderstand what you're saying (or vice versa), you're right. Postpone important discussions until later in the week.

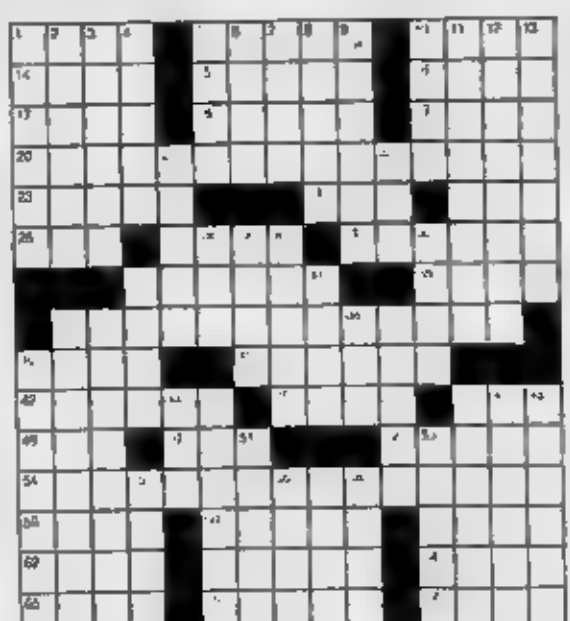
TAURUS (April 20 to May 20): Conversations with authority figures, parents, teachers and the police are extremely confusing today. You're not sure what others expect from you. Don't act until you know.

CANCER (June 21 to July 22): Discussions with friends about how to share something or how to take responsibility for someone else could be muddled. Don't agree to anything until you know what's happening.

VIRGO (Aug. 23 to Sept. 22): You might fall for an unusual philosophy. It's easy to be seduced by fast talk about spiritual, religious or political ideas. Stay alert.

DAILY CROSSWORD

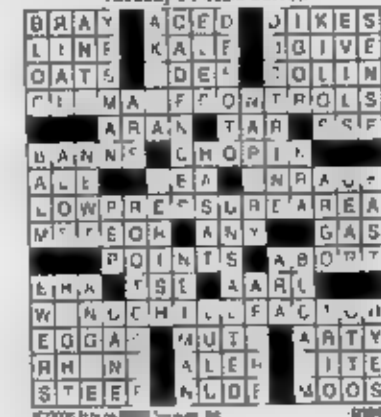
- ACROSS**
- Lead actor
 - Metal luster
 - Nickel or dime
 - Abate
 - Walled city near Madrid
 - The King and I heroine
 - Young lobo
 - Unwieldy
 - G-men
 - Upped cash
 - Solid ground
 - Wallach of "The Magnificent Seven"
 - Dockworkers' org
 - Those elected
 - Links grp.
 - Show hosts
 - Good looks
 - Complexion woe
 - Jipped cash
 - Cupbearer of the gods
 - Congor catchers
 - Coda of silence
 - Unit of loudness
 - Mauna volcano
 - Danson of "Becker"
 - Attorney's org.
 - Grumpy characters
 - Upped cash
 - SSS designation
 - City on the Mohawk
 - Center
 - Bell sound
 - Lesko of "Lil"
 - Bond's alma mater
 - Sp. maiden
 - Prevaling tide
 - Extravagant speech
- DOWN**
- Karate instructor
 - Formosa, today
 - Denslike flowers
 - Return to, defaults
 - Grade
 - Karamazov brother
 - Don Johnson TV series
 - Skur over
 - Toll secrets
 - Al fresco hangout
 - Type of swimsuit
 - Habitually lazy
 - lie of tennis
 - Hitchhike
 - That man
 - RSVP word
 - Elation
 - Yellow-lover mosquito
 - Hacks
 - Lingant
 - Coen's neighbor
 - Scaving
 - Well-behaved



By Philip J. Anderson
Portland, OR

5/10/06

Tuesday's Puzzle Solved



- 38 Coop biddy
39 Jpright
40 Souped-up vehicles
43 Iwon do
44 Spent away
45 Teton Sioux
47 Satchel of Uranus
48 Concurrence
49 Perfume oil
53 Dayton entry
55 Heroic narrative
56 Put on the payroll
57 MBA course
58 Dune anecdotal

MIKROKOSMOS



BY JOMIKE TEJIDO

BEN



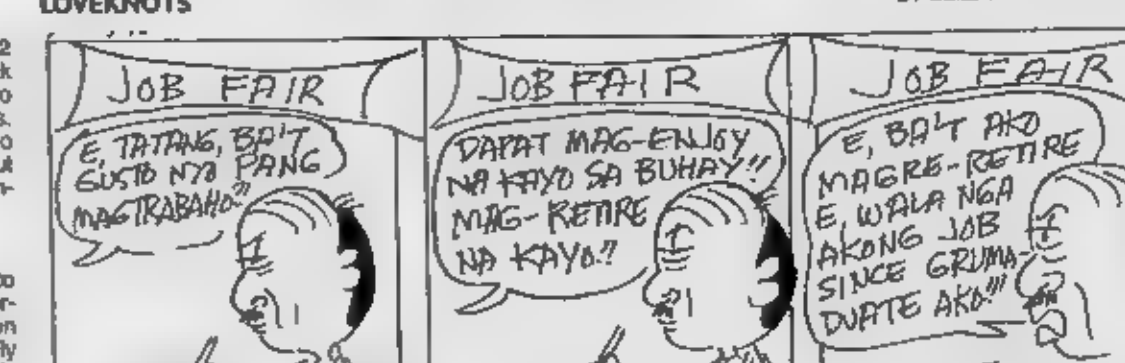
BY DANIEL SHELTON

KIKO MACHINE



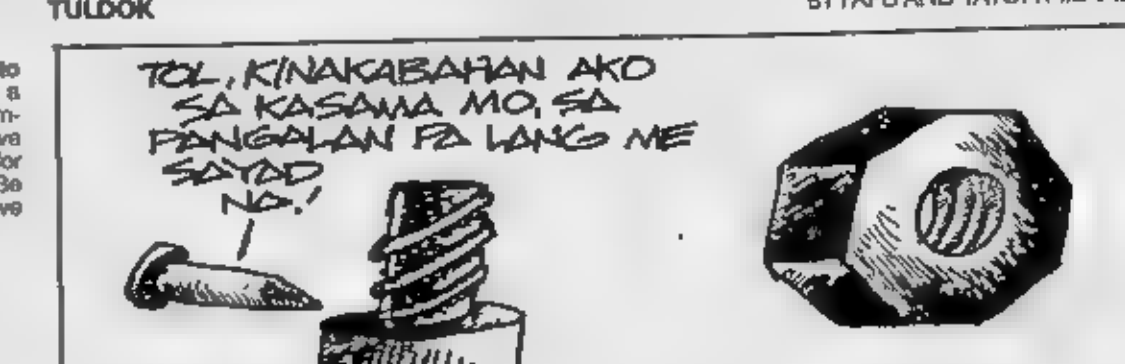
BY MANIX ABRERA

LOVEKNOTS



BY ELIZABETH CHIONGLO

TULDOK



BY PAPU AND TATUM MILAMBILING



NANCY
Castiglione ROGER MARGALLO

ENTERTAINMENT

Nancy, are you listening?

JOHN PRATS TOLD THE press that he had no time for love and that he'd rather focus on his career.

"After coming out of the 'Pinoy Big Brother' house, I realized I should take my work seriously. Not everyone is given a second chance," John says.

This must be why rumored girlfriend Nancy Castiglione has not been seeing much of John lately.

False alarm

ALTHOUGH Meryll Soriano looks very much in love with new boyfriend Bernard Palanca, she insists the rumor that she's infatigating is false.

RUSHES

"I just gained weight," she asserts. How can she be pregnant when she is set to portray a female boxer in the Cinemalaya entry "In Da Red Corner"? "She's even willing to shave her head for the role," says Robbie Tan, chair of Cine-

malaya's monitoring committee.

Zaturnnah auditions

LAST Sunday, director Mark Meily conducted auditions for the film version of Carlo Vergara's "Ang Kagila-Gilalas na Pakikipagsapalaran ni Zsazsa Zaturnnah."

The tryouts were for Femina, the contravida, and Dodong, the love interest. Meily says he's looking for a Femina who's "tall and stylish, like a supermodel."



RUFA Mae Quinto



Al-AI de las Alas

Ogie Alcasid landed the lead role of Ada, a gay beauncian who turns into superheroine Zsazsa or Rufa Mae Quinto. Shooting starts mid-June, says Meily.

Motivation

Al-AI de las Alas told the press that her main motivation in her crying scenes in the new soap "Bituing Walang Ningning" was her new home—specifically, its monthly amortization.

The girl works hard for a living... and board and lodging.

Rooting for Aldred

ALDRED Gatchalian, the teen who chose to "exit voluntarily" on "Pinoy Big Brother," won a number of fans after his first guest appearance on "The Buzz"—including host Boy Abunda.

The manager-host admitted on the show that he was disappointed when Aldred quit two weeks ago. He could've won the competition, Boy sighed.

What of waste of dimples!

New girl in the house

LAST Sunday, a new housemate was introduced to replace ousted housemate Bam Romana.

Dubbed the "Amazing Amerasian of Olon-gapo," Brenda Fox joined the "young and the restless" teens in Kuya's house.

Before signing up with PBB, Brenda topped the Miss Zambales Tourism contest.



ALDRED Gatchalian

WHICH WOMAN COMPLETES THE IMPOSSIBLE MISSION?

TOM CRUISE

MISSION IMPOSSIBLE

MICHELLE MAGGIE KERI MONAGHAN Q RUSSELL

MissionImpossible.com

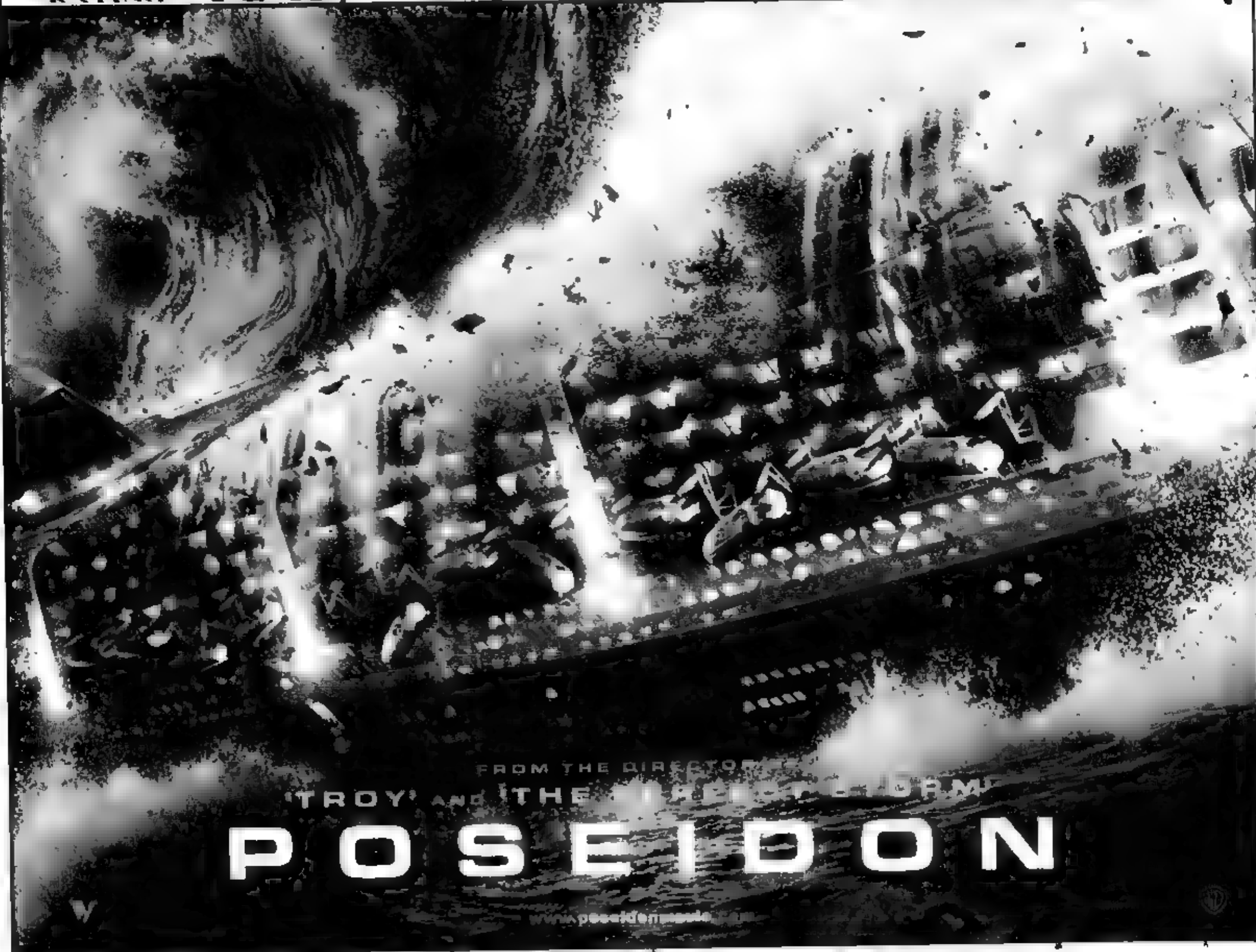
2ND BLOCKBUSTER WEEK!



GRAND OPENING TODAY

MTRCB PG-13

Children below 13 yrs old will only be allowed if accompanied by a parent or adult. Strong caution due to prolonged scenes of tragedy and devastation.



WHAT'S INSIDE

Absent-minded
CEO /B3Treasury
rejects all bids
for 4-year
T-bonds /B2

BUSINESS

Editor Raúl O. Marcelo • Assistant Editor Corrie S. Narisma

Text us your feedback: inquirer biz name/age/city/message to 2207 (Globe) or 283 (Smart) E-mail: pr_business@inquirer.com.ph

DOF rejects bid to cut corporate tax rate

Changes in VAT law seen to compromise gov't fiscal targets

By Michelle V. Remo

THE DEPARTMENT OF FINANCE HAS RULED AGAINST A proposal from the business community to immediately bring down

the corporate income tax rate to its original level of 32 percent, as it explains to business owners that the high

visions of the Reformed VAT Law, which basically expanded the coverage of the value-added tax and raised the VAT rate from 10 to 12 percent.

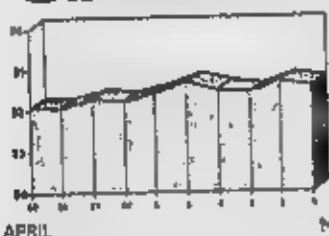
According to a ranking finance official, the DOF is not inclined to amend the VAT law because proceeds of the tax measure are already incorporated in the government's fiscal program. Any

changes to the VAT law will compromise the government's fiscal targets.

The official added that it would require legislation to bring down the corporate income tax rate to 32 percent, and subject the entire VAT law to another round of scrutiny by Congress.

The VAT law, which had a tough time

DOJ/BS

INDICATORS
CURRENCIES

PESO-DOLLAR RATE

P 51.45 = \$

As of 5 p.m., May 9, 2006

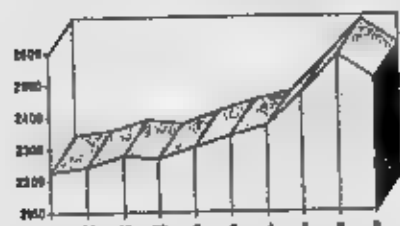
Y 111.90 = \$1

As of 5 p.m., May 9, 2006

GOLD: \$678.40-678.90

per ounce Hong Kong, May 9, 2006

STOCK MARKET



(See stock market report on Page B6)

Stocks close 2.97% lower

SHARE PRICES YESTERDAY closed 2.97 percent lower falling sharply as investors took profits on the recent rally which had taken the market to near seven-year highs, dealers said.

They said losses in heavyweight Philippine Long Distance Telephone also weighed on sentiment. (See story below)

Profit-taking is expected to continue in the coming sessions as most stocks are still expensive after recent sharp gains.

The composite index fell 76.94 points to 2,512.23, the day's low, after touching a high of 2,590.50.

It had gained 14 percent during a five-day rally.

Volume was 2.13 billion shares worth P2.85 billion.

The all-shares index ended down 28.64 points to 1,548.56. Losers led gainers 62 to 46, with 46 stocks unchanged.

The peso traded at 51.38 to the dollar by midday.

STOCKS/B6

PLDT sweetens dividends as Q1 net slips

By Daxim L. Lucas

THE COUNTRY'S LARGEST TELECOMMUNICATIONS group yesterday decided to cheer up investors by hiking their dividend payments after it reported muted earnings growth in the first quarter.

Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co. (PLDT) earned P8.6 billion in the first quarter, representing a 7-percent decline compared to the P9.2 billion in the same period last year.

Speaking to reporters during a briefing, PLDT president and CEO Napoleon L. Nazareno attributed the decline to additional depreciation expenses and lower gains due to foreign exchange rate fluctuations.

Excluding forex gains, however, PLDT's first quarter income actually grew to P7.6 billion, representing a 16-percent increase over the P6.5 billion in core earnings reported in the first quarter of 2005.

To offset the disappointing performance, company officials are raising the dividend payments to 60 percent of this year's core earnings, from the 50 percent of the previous year.

"Part of our philosophy is to balance what we pay our creditors with what we pay our shareholders," PLDT chairman Manuel V. Pangilinan told reporters during a briefing.

The higher payout means that the company will have a 50-50 mix of resources being allocated to creditors and shareholders as compared with the previous years, when as much as 80 percent were paid out to creditors.

"That will be the trend for the future," Pangilinan said, in an apparent effort to keep the company's investors happy amid a resurgence in the performance of its main rival, Globe Telecom Inc.

But the PLDT chief turned sober when he gave an assessment for the company's performance for the rest of the year. Pangilinan said that PLDT this year would not likely duplicate its record-breaking financial performance last year.

Pangilinan predicted that the company's

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DOE postpones auction of wind power development deals

By Abigail L. Ho

THE DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY has shelved the second wind power contracting round until later in the year as the agency continued evaluating more sites to be offered to investors for development.

Mario Marasigan, director of the department's energy utilization

and management bureau, said that out of the 17 sites earlier evaluated and lined up for bidding, only a few remained.

"Some have extremely low potential, making them unattractive to investors. Others are located in private lands, while some already have interested parties so we'll no longer include those in the contracting round," he told reporters.

He said the DOE would have to expand the project by evaluating more potential sites.

The contracting round, originally scheduled for end-March, would have to wait until the DOE gets a "large enough number" of potential sites to offer for development.

"We have already validated around 30 sites, but we still have to evaluate them. All of these are

still free. There's no definite number on how many investors can join. We still have to finish our assessment," he said.

Nine local and foreign firms and consortia have earlier expressed interest in developing some of the 17 new wind sites that the DOE had included in its 2nd Wind Power Contracting Round.

These include First Gen Re-

newables Inc. for sites in Bago City and Cauayan in Negros Occidental, Benguet Corp. for those in Allen-Lavesares and Calbayog City in Northern Samar, and National Petroleum Corp. for those in Bani and Bolinao in Pangasinan and San Andres in Quezon.

The other interested parties were Philippine National Oil Co. Energy Development Corp. for the Bantay,

Ilocos Sur site, Trans-Asia Renewable Energy Corp. for the Mercedes, Camarines Norte wind area, and Coastal Power Development Corp. for the Daet, Camarines Norte site.

A consortium composed of Transnational Diversified Corp., Asia One Power Corp. and Cammon Windsolar Energy Inc. is eyeing two wind sites: Carmen and Oslob, both in Cebu.

Treasury rejects all bids for 4-year T-bonds

Market misinterpreted BSP chief statement—Cruz

By Michelle Y. Remo

THE GOVERNMENT REJECTED ALL bids for the 4-year Treasury bond in an auction yesterday.

The move, according to officials, was aimed at preventing the market from pushing interest rates up. It also sends the signal that the government was not desperate for cash, they said.

With the rejection of the bids, the rate for the 4-year bond remained at its previous month's level of 6.5 percent.

The rate could have gone up by 63.6 points to 7.136 percent had the Bureau of the Treasury accepted the offers.

Tenders during yesterday's auction reached P5.315 billion, higher than the government's debt offering of P3.5 billion.

National Treasurer Omar Cruz said the bids were "throw-away," as they reflected risk premiums that were absurdly high.

"We fully rejected the bids on account of market incoherence and apparent confusion. On one hand, investors are saying their sentiment remains positive because of the good



CRUZ

fiscal position of the government but, on the other hand, they are actually bidding up the rate," Cruz said in a briefing after the auction.

He said the market misinterpreted the statement of the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas about the need to push interest rates a little higher.

BSP Governor Amando Tetangco Jr. was quoted in news reports as saying that interest rates were already a

little too low and should be increased a bit to encourage investments.

But Cruz said Tetangco was referring to the 91-day Treasury bill rate and not government bonds.

Cruz admitted that the 91-day T-bill rate had fallen too low and that the Bureau of the Treasury was willing to accept bids for higher rates.

The latest 91-day T-bill rate stood at 4.768 percent, much lower than the inflation rate, which settled at 7.1 percent last April. This means the gains from investing in T-bills would only be gobbled up by the increase in consumer prices.

The treasurer explained that since the inflation rate was seen falling in the coming years, the current yields on T-bonds (government debt instruments with maturity of more than one year) were just appropriate.

Cruz said the Bureau of the Treasury had the capability to reject bids because the government's cash position remained healthy. He said his office could in fact decide to further cut the volume of T-bill and T-bond offerings in the third quarter if the market would push for unreasonably high rates.

Globe readies \$130-M loan for expansion

By Daxim L. Lucas

GLOBE TELECOM INC., THE COUNTRY'S second-largest telecommunications group, may borrow as much as \$130 million from creditors in the near term to finance its foray into third-generation (3G) network services.

Speaking to reporters on Tuesday, Globe president and CEO Gerardo C. Ablaza Jr. said the amount may be drawn in US dollars or in its peso equivalent, depending on which currency would be more advantageous for the firm.

The announcement of a new borrowing plan comes after the company revealed a strong performance in the first quarter of 2006, which was widely praised by industry analysts and cheered by its investors.

The performance emboldened the

company to push ahead with its expansion plan into the still untapped 3G market.

Ablaza said that between \$50 million and \$70 million of the planned borrowing will be used exclusively for the expansion of its 3G network, including the setting up of additional base stations nationwide.

At present, Globe has 150 base stations for 3G services. It hopes to raise this number to 1,000 under the expansion plan to make 3G services accessible nationwide.

The Globe chief said that the company has already asked at least three banking groups to submit bids for the proposed borrowing.

This includes BPI Capital Corp.—a subsidiary of Ayala-owned Bank of the Philippine Islands—and the local unit of German banking giant

Deutsche Bank AG, as well as a third unidentified financial institution.

"The loan will likely be a combination of dollars and pesos, but we would like to maximize the peso component," Ablaza said, explaining that the interest rate differential between US dollar- and peso-denominated loans have been narrowing in recent months.

US interest rates have been rising slowly since last year due to rising inflation in the world's largest economy. In contrast, interest rates on local borrowings have been going down after the government instituted a recovery plan to stave off a fiscal crisis.

In addition, the fiscal recovery plan also boosted the value of the peso against the US dollar, making it more attractive for companies to borrow locally rather than abroad.

Banks told to prepare for tougher US stance vs money laundering

By Doris C. Dumlaog

A GLOBAL ANTI-MONEY LAUNDERING expert has urged Philippine banks to prepare for tougher offshore regulations, particularly in the United States, even after the country had been stricken off the Financial Action Task Force (FATF)'s list of "uncooperative" countries.

Rowan Bosworth-Davies—one of the foreign consultants earlier hired by the Asian Development Bank to help the Philippines free itself from the FATF blacklist and now a director for fraud and anti-money laundering solutions of US-based SAS International—said local banks must prioritize the establishment of an effective electronic money laundering transaction monitoring platform as required by the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas.

The BSP earlier extended by 18 months the deadline for compliance with this requirement.

"While I could see the potential for complacency, I hope the banks will look at this (extension) as an opportunity rather than a freedom time not to do anything," Bosworth-Davies said in an interview with the Inquirer.

The visiting anti-money laundering expert said the US, in view of its widening current account deficits, was increasingly becoming more rigorous on banking regulations particularly because the world's biggest economy was now having more difficult time luring back the huge amount of dollars flowing to Asia.

"I don't think the real threat is coming from Philippine regulators. If there's going to be a threat at all, it will be from the Americans. They will exert pressure on foreign banks by denying them the ability to clear dollars through the correspondent clearing system," he said.

With over \$10 billion coming in from eight million overseas Filipino workers, the remittance system is a big business in the case of the Philippine banking system.

He said banks must take advantage of the additional time given by the BSP to beef up anti-money laundering systems and make sure they were working properly.

SAS, one of the world's leading software company based in North Carolina, USA, recently signed a contract to provide anti-money laundering solutions to Philippine Veterans Bank.

Bosworth-Davies has had over 25 years of practical and theoretical experience on the investigation and prosecution of fraud and white-collar crime, once a Fraud Squad detective at New Scotland Yard and likewise ran the investigations division of one of UK's financial self-regulating organizations.

He said the biggest challenge faced by the country after its delisting from the FATF was the implementation by banks of a more effective "know-your-customer (KYC)" rule which was the cornerstone of anti-money laundering prevention.

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Editor Cesar D. Mangawara

A Jeep for first and third world travel

By Tessa R. Salazar

Conclusion

IN LOCAL PARLANCE, HOW would one call the "beastly" image of the Jeep Commander? *Matibay* (durable), *machong-macho* (manly), *maya-bang* (boastful), or *matigas* (tough), perhaps? Whatever one may call it wherever, the makers of the Jeep Commander designed this vehicle beyond the reach of the "cute" SUV pretenders proliferating in the market.

An SUV this serious-looking surely must be for a select few. Its tough-as-

nails look only the military can love is surprisingly a joy to drive and ride in, even during those shaky moments in the rugged Omani trails.

Perhaps, for an SUV maker that has been making its mark for the past 65 years, conformity comes optional. The Jeep family, after all, has been much about that all-American bad boy image of the 4x4 world.

Choice of the name

The choice of the name "Commander" can even be taken literally. Want to "feel like a general," be in control of the situation and do some serious offroading during weekends without leaving the comforts and perks of your rocking chair? Here's the Commander for you.

And because it comes with theater styling seven seats, the general can bring six of his top lieutenants with him to cov-

er the battlefield. It's just as comfortable backing out of a garage in a suburban US home as it is negotiating the unpredictable trails of an Asian wilderness.

That means, the Commander can fit into the Philippine setting as well as any other imported vehicle that has colonized our shores. Full-service support will come from aggressive CATS Motors on Edsa, Greenhills.

Product offensive

CATS Motors, the Philippine distributor of Mercedes-Benz, DaimlerChrysler and Chrysler, Dodge and Jeep vehicles, promised that it would be vigilant in its drive to strengthen its Jeep product offensive in the country. Apart from its state-of-the-art showroom and facilities on Edsa, it also has a Mercedes-Benz showroom at the Fort Bonifacio Global City. Its Chrysler, Dodge and Jeep vehi-

cles are backed by three-year warranties.

The Jeep Commander 4.7L V8 is priced competitively at P2.850 million, placing it in the same league as these leading luxury SUVs—Expedition Eddie Bauer (4x4 A/T) at P2.999 million, Mitsubishi Pajero 4x4 with new bulkier body at P2.7 million, Toyota Prado (4x4 automatic) P2.862 million, manual) P2.762 million; Chevy Trailblazer (4x4 AT 4.2-L) P2.299 million, (4x2 AT) P2.099 million, Tahoe (4x2 AT 4.8L V8) P2.525 million, Suburban (4x2 AT 5.3L V8) P3.095 million; and Nissan Patrol 4x4 (AT diesel) P2.408 million, (AT gas) P2.597 million.

Classic styling

While some observers may call its styling "beastly," its makers prefer to call it "classic." The Commander's styling includes an upright windscreen, backlight and rear end, as well as its more vertical

body sides and side glass.

For the first time in a Jeep, there are three rows of seats. Each row is slightly higher than the one in front, thus the term "theater styling" and improving the optimal all-round view for every passenger. The second row seats are mounted 117.3 mm (4.62 in.) higher than the front row, and the third row seats are 120.45 mm (4.75 inches) higher than the second row. The view of the driver on the rear windshield, however, becomes too small for this writer's point of view.

Nonetheless is the stepped roof which provides more headroom for second and third row occupants. Also evident is the designers' thoughtfulness for children riding the vehicles with front mounted sunroof and two skylights complete with shades over the second row seats. It has available heating, ventilation and air-conditioning in the third row.



IT doesn't feel like a fish out of water.



AS it is in the rough and tumble world of SUVs.

Vintage cars hit the road

MY DRIFT

Andre Palma

DUE TO SPACE LIMITATION, ANDRE Palma's column will appear next week.

SINCE AUTOMOBILE ASSOCIATION Philippines is observing its 75th anniversary this year, what better way to kick off the week-long celebration than with a vintage car parade?

And since AAP, which was organized in 1931 as the Philippine Motor Association, had its first office in the Manila Hotel, what better place to flag off the parade than in front of the most historical five-star hotel in Manila?

So if you were in Port Area last Sunday morning, you might have caught a glimpse of lovingly restored vintage cars streaming out of the Manila Hotel's parking lot, followed by not-so-vintage members of car clubs such as the Miata Club, the Mini Car (pre-BMW Mini Cooper) Club, Mercedes-Benz Club, Volkswagen Car Club and the British Roadster Group.

Members of the Vintage Car Club of the Philippines, which was founded by AAP director Ronald D. Reidenbach and is now led by Neneng Gorospe, proudly posted their club banner on their vehicles as did members of the Classic Car Club on theirs. The enthusiasm and camaraderie among the various car club members filled the air in the Roma Sa-

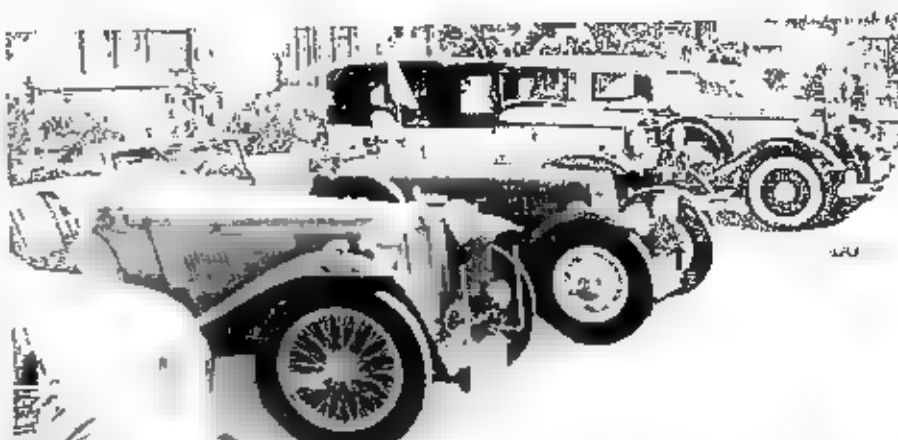
lon as they snacked on cookies and coffee offered by the hotel management courtesy of Manila Hotel president Joey Lina.

After a briefing program, it was out doors for the ceremonial flag-off by AAP veep Johnny Angeles. The parade route covered Roxas Boulevard, Buendia, Ayala Avenue and Makati Avenue, ending up at the Department of Tourism grounds on T.M. Kalaw Avenue for lunch and the awarding ceremony.

Car No. 1, an Irish blue 1948 MG TC roadster owned and driven by Ben Silvestre, won the Best Classic Car trophy awarded by Gina de Castro, daughter-in-law of the late Cresenciano C. de Castro, an architect who owned one of the largest vintage and classic car collections in the country.

The Oldest Car Award went to Romy Lopeña for his 1928 Model A Ford which is recognized by those in the know as the "Oldest Running Car" in the Philippines.

Jimmy Barleta, owner and driver of a bright red 1932 Studebaker topdown roadster, won the Most Attractive Display trophy. Barleta told me that he



VENERABLE cars lined up for the parade: a 1946 Plymouth, 1948 MG TC roadster, 1928 Bugatti kit car, 1939 Model A Ford and 1932 Lincoln.

AIDA SEVILLA-MENDOZA

spent P2 million to restore his Studebaker and that its market value in the United States is now \$100,000 but he's not selling.

Virgilio Alano, owner and driver of a red 1928 Bugatti kit car, won the Funniest Looking Car trophy. Alano also won the Funniest Looking Driver trophy as he was clad in 1920s attire complete with cap and spats.

The Best Presentation (most complete packaging) trophy went to Mr. and Mrs. Peter Smith of the British Roadster

Group for their 1941 all-origina. Willys MacArthur type US Army Jeep. Smith said that his '41 Jeep was "dressed for normal use" not for a parade.

Five other trophies were presented as minor awards, some in the spirit of fun such as an "AAP Wild West Award" and a special award for the entry that bore the oldest Philippine Motor Association insignia. The AAP vintage and car clubs parade was sponsored by Sustagen Premium with Petron, the Manila Hotel and the Department of Tourism

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Aida Sevilla-Mendoza



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Do you know that Thailand gives so much subsidy and tariff incentives to its motoring industry that's why Thailand is No. 1 in the business in the entire Asian region?

Not that Thailand has better vehicle engineers than us. No, the massive support of the Thai government has given that country's automotive business the impetus to move miles ahead of its competitors in Southeast Asia.

Our engineers are among the world's best. That's why many of them are found anywhere in the four corners of the globe.

Yoshifumi Komura, the energetic president and CEO of Isuzu Philippines Corp., acknowledges the key role a government plays in the automotive world.

"Without the support of government, the vehicle business can't prosper," Komura said. "And, for that matter, any business needs the government in order to succeed."

I had lunch with Komura-san a while back and I found him to be a deep thinker and a firm believer of the Filipino's capability to score big when challenged to perform.

"With so much help from these staff of mine, Isuzu continues to be competitive," Komura said, referring to Art Balmadrid, Timmy Naval and Ronald "Isuzu Joe" Baladad who were with us during the brain-picking lunch. "They work really hard to attain the corporate

FULL TANK

Al Mendoza



objectives of IPC."

Komura-san said he envied Thailand "because Thailand gives top priority to its automotive business."

Said Komura: "For many years now, the automotive business in Thailand has been a recipient of tax incentives, and even subsidy, that's why the vehicle business there has always been very healthy."

Thailand manufactures the best selling Isuzu Akerra, known in Bangkok as MU-7. The Akerra, in case you still don't know, has given the Toyota Fortuner a strong challenge last year. At one point, the sales of Akerra reached unbelievable heights especially when the queue for the Fortuner breached the two-month barrier.

But, of course, Isuzu's best-seller in Thailand has always been the D'Max. In fact, because of D'Max, Isuzu has become Thailand's No. 1 pickup business for 23 straight years now. Due to that astonishing distinction, Thailand is known as the pickup capital of the world.

In the Philippines, D'Max has been No. 1 the last two years—and counting.

Isuzu Philippines used to import D'Max. But under Komura-san's robust leadership that began two years ago, the D'Max is now being assembled at the IPC plant in Sta. Rosa, Laguna, with CKD (completely knocked down) parts completely imported from Bangkok.

Komura, assigned to various key assignments in North America and China after joining Isuzu Motors Limited in Japan in April of 1978 at age 22, said he was happy that Isuzu is doing well despite "the hard, unpredictable times."

He attributes that to "our customers' total satisfaction that extends to our after-sales policy of treating them" with special care and attention.

"With the government as our No. 1 partner, we could always contribute to building a powerful economy and do our piece in providing jobs in our own humble way," said Komura, married to Miwa with whom he has a son (Shota) and a daughter (Mio). "A good business means a good backing from government."

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Comments to menju@pildtdsl.net.

San Miguel Q1 profit up by 7% to P2.17B

Overseas operations provide big boost to sales

By Elizabeth L. Sanchez

was expecting the company's revenue to grow by 30 percent this year.

To sustain growth this year, Cojuangco said San Miguel needed to drive up its cash flow and strive to improve its core working capital.

Cojuangco also said San Miguel would maintain discipline in its capital expenditures and management of resources.

"Our priorities now are to sustain all the gains we have made over the last eight years and build on them," Cojuangco said.

San Miguel also announced it had appointed KPMG Laya Mananghaya & Co. as its new auditor, replacing SGV & Co.

In the meantime, Ang said San Miguel would pursue its planned offering of hybrid shares upon the completion of the probe of the alleged overstatement of sales by one of its subsidiaries.

The planned offering, which had already attracted \$700 million worth of orders, was postponed after San Miguel received a letter claiming that Philippine Beverage Partners Inc. had overstated its sales figures.

The total sales of Philbev accounted for 2.1 percent of San Miguel's group-wide sales of P227 billion.

Cojuangco also announced that National Foods had completed its acquisition of Lactos, a leading specialty cheese company in Australia.

Cojuangco said San Miguel's acquisition of National Foods would lay the groundwork for value creation for San Miguel in the future.

San Miguel is also building up its capacity for beverage overseas.

Cojuangco said two plants in South China and Vietnam "will follow soon." No details were given.

P5B earmarked for sugar mills upgrade

By Christine A. Gaylican

LOCAL SUGAR MILLERS WILL infuse into the industry more than P5 billion worth of investments in the next three years to upgrade existing facilities and venture into power co-generation ventures.

The Central Azucarera de Pedro Group, Hawaiian Philippines Inc. and the Central Azucarera de Tarlac are planning to install new boilers that would allow them to venture into co-generation, Philippine Sugar Millers Association president V. Francisco Varua said.

The co-generation scheme allows sugar millers to convert sugar bagasse into fuel and generate at least 9 megawatts of electricity, Varua said.

PSMA groups 22 sugar milling companies in the country. Together, PSMA members account for 80 percent of the country's total sugar production.

Varua said the huge investments were needed to enable the industry to cope with the expected increases in demand for sugar by-products that

were used as alternative fuel and to strictly comply with anti-pollution standards.

"Investments are getting bigger and bigger but they are needed to cope with the needs of the times," he said.

He said the 15 PSMA members that have already complied with those standards had spent around P5 billion to install anti-pollution devices, including new boilers and smoke stacks.

He said the installation of three new smoke stacks would cost about P250 million, while a new boiler could amount to P500 million.

The needed investments account for nearly half the estimated P12 billion in revenue that the sugar milling industry generates yearly. He said it will take the industry five years to recover the required investments.

In line with the country's efforts to promote the development of alternative fuels, National Development Co. will put up an integrated ethanol plant in Negros Oriental under a joint venture with Hermundo Teves and Co. and Tao Corp.

SAN MIGUEL CORP. SOUTHEAST Asia's largest food and beverage firm, said its first quarter net income rose 7 percent to P2.17 billion, as foreign acquisitions boosted sales.

San Miguel chair Eduardo Cojuangco Jr. said consolidated net sales revenue for January to March reached P60.8 billion, 29 percent higher than the year-ago level.

This was driven by a 26-percent volume growth from the consolidated operations of Australian dairy giant National Foods Ltd., as well as a 13-percent growth in the sales volume of San Miguel's food and agribusiness operations.

Consolidated operating income reached P5.49 billion, 49 percent higher than last year's level.

"If 2005 was a year of acceleration, 2006 will be one of staying the course. With all the moving parts in place, we now shift our focus from an outward-looking, expansionist phase to one characterized by strengthening organic growth and enhancing operating efficiency," Cojuangco told stockholders.

San Miguel president Ramon Ang, in the meantime, said he

Philcomsat Holdings gets new lease on life

PHILCOMSAT HOLDINGS CORP. (PHC) yesterday managed to secure a new lease on life after a majority of its stockholders approved the board's proposal to prolong the firm's corporate life for another 50 years.

PHC yesterday convened a special stockholders' meeting at the Manila Golf and Country Club in Forbes Park.

On Monday, it secured an order from the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) that allowed the board under PHC president Manuel Nieto Jr. to tackle the extension of the firm's corporate life which expires today.

Company vice president Philip Brodett presided over the tumultuous meeting in the absence of Nieto.

During the meeting, a verbal brawl erupted between the two opposing groups, which stalled the proceedings for nearly an hour.

Brodett and representatives of the Presidential Commission on Good Government were up against minority shareholders led by Sen. Juan Ponce Enrile, the Ilusorio family and lawyer Victor Africa.

After an intense wrangling between PCCG Commissioner for Asset Management Ricardo Abcede and Enrile, the motion to extend PHC's corporate existence was passed largely

due to votes held by the PCCG, which were represented by Enrique Locsin.

"The next step is to file an application with the Securities and Exchange Commission to amend the articles of incorporation of the company," Brodett told the Inquirer in a telephone interview after the stockholders' meeting.

PHC is 80-percent owned by satellite technology pioneer Philippine Communications Satellite Corp. (Philcomsat). Both companies are owned by Philippine Overseas Telecommunications Corp. (POTC), whose shares were sequestered by the Aquino administration in 1986 on allegations that the stocks were acquired using ill-gotten wealth.

During yesterday's meeting, the minority shareholders led by Enrile and Africa were upset over the absence of Nieto, and questioned the authority of Brodett and PHC assistant corporate secretary Delfin Angcao to preside over the assembly.

During the meeting, Enrile said he was in favor of dissolving PHC and distributing its assets among the company's shareholders.

"We (minority shareholders) want this company to be dissolved because the people managing this company are dissipating its assets," Enrile said.

Enrile is one of the founding shareholders of PHC's mother firm Philcomsat, of which about 7 percent is controlled by his family.

Brodett, however, denied there was dissipation of PHC's assets and said the company was expecting to generate net earnings this year, largely from its investment in a joint venture call center project with the SM Group.

In 2004, PHC invested P80 million in a 120-seat telemarketing project through a wholly owned unit, Telecommunications Center Inc. (TCI).

Elizabeth L. Sanchez

DOF rejects bid . . . From page B1

at the legislature, is considered to be the centerpiece of the Arroyo administration's fiscal reform agenda.

The tax measure is estimated to generate P75 billion in additional revenues this year alone, and is expected to bring the government closer to its goal of wiping out its gaping budget deficit.

By 2008, the government hopes to close the budget gap, which last year stood at P146.8 billion.

Of the P75 billion in additional revenues, P5.6 billion will come from the higher corporate income tax rate.

The finance official said the 35-percent corporate income tax rate would be in effect until end-2008, as stated under the VAT law.

By 2009, the official said, the rate would be brought down to 30 percent, or even lower than the previous 32 percent.

But the Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PCCI) earlier said that the 35-percent corporate income tax rate was proving to be burdensome for businesses, making the country's economic environment less competitive.

Noting that the new income tax rate is one of the highest in Asia, PCCI has asked the government to consider reducing the corporate income tax rate.

The PCCI said that while it supports the VAT law in general, it still would want some minor provisions amended.

Aside from bringing down the corporate income tax rate, PCCI is urging the repeal of the provision

putting a 70-percent cap on input VAT credits. According to the VAT law, the 70-percent cap means that the maximum amount of input VAT credits that a business entity can claim for one taxable period should be equivalent to 70 percent of its output VAT.

But after receiving a rash of complaints from business owners, the government issued a new set of implementing rules and regulations (IRR) that eased the application of the VAT cap provision.

According to the IRR, the 70-percent VAT cap would only apply to businesses whose input VAT credits exceed their output VAT. This means that those whose input VAT credits do not exceed the output VAT can still receive their claims in full.

But despite the relaxed interpretation of the 70-percent VAT cap, businesses are still calling for the removal of the provision.

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PSE allows securities lending

Bourse issues rules, expects move to boost stocks trading

THE PHILIPPINE STOCK EXCHANGE (PSE) said on Tuesday that investors would be able to trade using borrowed stocks by the second half of this year after it introduces rules for securities lending that would give a much-needed boost to liquidity.

"Securities lending has gained popularity in developed countries since it was first introduced in the 1970s, but the practice has not taken root in the Philippines because of the lack of rules," PSE president Francis Lim said.

"We need the sophistication of securities borrowing and lending to promote growth of other securities, especially derivatives, which are popular trading instruments in advanced markets abroad," Lim said in a statement.

Securities borrowing and lending involves the loan of securities by a lender—who owns or controls the securities—to a borrower, who needs the secu-



LIM

rities to support settlement obligations or trading strategies.

Lim explained that SBL transactions allow a lender to earn an extra income from his or her stocks outside of their dividend yield.

"Lending out the shares provides the lender an extra income, but at the same time the borrowed stock creates a cover or hedge for the borrower against a failed trade," he said.

The Philippine stock market finished down nearly 3 percent on Tuesday, ending a five-day bull run that saw it gain 14 percent as foreign investors were attracted by improving government finances and solid company earnings.

Analysts expect the market to keep climbing in 2006 but poor liquidity could restrict its gains.

The dominance of family holdings and cross-company stakes means that most of the Philippines' largest listed companies have only around 10 percent of their shares trading freely on the market.

The PSE's proposed SBL rules specify requirements, including a contract—called the master

securities lending agreement or MSLA—which has to be registered with the BIR for tax exemption.

To be signed by the securities borrower and lender, the MSLA sets the terms, conditions and rights of each party, as well as the mechanics for the recall or return of the borrowed stock.

The rules also state that a borrower would have to put up collateral equal to at least 105 percent of the borrowed stock.

The lender would receive all dividends or stock rights that accrue to the security while on loan.

The issuance of the SBL rules is part of PSE's long-term program to create more liquidity in the local market.

The PSE said the Philippines' Securities and Exchange Commission, the Bureau of Internal Revenue and the central bank would also issue rules on securities trading.

Reuters

PHILIPPINE STOCK EXCHANGE

(As of May 9, 2006)

STOCKS	OPEN	FINANCIAL	LOW	CLOSE	VOLUME
Asiatrust Dev Bank Inc	71.1	71.1	69.8	71.1	133,000
Bank of the Philippine Islands	39.8	39.8	38.5	39.8	841,000
Bank of the Philippine Islands	71.5	71.5	69.8	71.5	1,364,000
China Banking Corp	86.0	86.0	85.0	86.0	2,670
Chiyu Savings Bank	20.25	20.25	20.25	20.25	600
Equitable Bank Inc	0.45	0.45	0.45	0.45	4,930,000
Equitable PCI Bank Inc	73.5	73.5	71.5	72.2	131,200
International Bank	40.0	40.0	39.5	40.0	130,300
Manila Banking Corp	47.0	47.0	44.0	44.0	1,840,000
Phil. Savings Bank	37.0	37.0	36.0	37.0	223,500
Rizal Commercial Bank Corp	39.0	39.0	39.0	40.0	20,200
Security Bank Corp	17.0	17.0	16.75	16.75	193,200
Union Bank of the Phil.	57.0	57.0	56.0	57.0	425,600
Other Financial Institutions	46.0	46.0	44.5	47.5	123,000
Bankland Inc	0.78	0.78	0.78	0.78	110,000
First Metro Invest Corp	31.0	31.0	31.0	31.0	17,000
Manila Financial Corp	3490.0	3490.0	3370.0	3370.0	190
PC Leasing & Fin. Inc	1.02	1.02	1.02	1.02	665,000
Phil. Stock Exchange Inc	210.0	210.0	210.0	210.0	1
San Life Financial Inc	2120.0	2120.0	2120.0	2120.0	1,150
San Life Financial Inc	1.36	1.36	1.28	1.28	15,599,000

INDUSTRY	OPEN	FINANCIAL	LOW	CLOSE	VOLUME
First Gen Corp	45.5	45.5	45.5	45.5	3,677,100
First Gen Corp	45.5	45.5	45.5	45.5	2,462,000
First Gen Corp	14.25	14.25	14.25	14.25	331,700
Manila Electric Co B	21.5	22.0	21.0	21.0	1,342,000
Manila Electric Co B	8.0	8.0	7.7	7.7	7,294,000
Manila Electric Co B	1.02	1.02	0.99	1.02	5,324,000
Manila Electric Co B	1.02	1.02	0.99	1.02	1,007,000

FOOD BEVERAGE & TOBACCO	OPEN	FINANCIAL	LOW	CLOSE	VOLUME
CARP Group Corp	3.4	3.4	3.4	3.4	14,000
CARP Group Corp	2.8	2.8	2.8	2.8	52,000
CARP Group Corp	23.9	24.0	23.5	24.0	123,000
CARP Group Corp	4.7	4.7	4.5	4.2	233,200
CARP Group Corp	0.8	0.81	0.79	0.79	83,000
CARP Group Corp	3.0	3.15	2.95	3.05	410,000
CARP Group Corp	0.19	0.19	0.18	0.18	1,422,000
CARP Group Corp	54.0	54.5	53.5	54.0	30,300
CARP Group Corp	83.5	83.5	82.5	84.0	161,500
CARP Group Corp	23.5	23.75	23.25	23.5	384,900
CARP Group Corp	0.25	0.28	0.24	0.25	2,744,000
CARP Group Corp	0.25	0.28	0.24	0.25	1,130,000

CONSTRUCTION, INFRASTRUCTURE & ALLIED SERVICES	OPEN	FINANCIAL	LOW	CLOSE	VOLUME
Southeast Asian	0.38	0.4	0.37	0.38	13,060,000
Southeast Asian	1.9	1.94	1.84	1.88	7,564,000
Southeast Asian	1.5	1.7	1.5	1.7	1,082,000
Southeast Asian	5.3	5.4	5.2	5.4	431,000
Southeast Asian	1.42	1.6	1.42	1.6	39,000

CHEMICALS	OPEN	FINANCIAL	LOW	CLOSE	VOLUME
Metro Alliance Holdings	0.35	0.38	0.25	0.25	350,000
Metro Alliance Holdings	0.73	0.73	0.73	0.73	200,000
Metro Alliance Holdings	0.73	0.73	0.73	0.73	86,000

DIVERSIFIED INDUSTRIALS	OPEN	FINANCIAL	LOW	CLOSE	VOLUME
Global Equities Inc	0.1	0.05	0.0975	0.1	7,800,000
Global Equities Inc	0.075	0.075	0.075	0.075	1,500,000
Global Equities Inc	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	10,000

HOLDING FIRMS	OPEN	FINANCIAL	LOW	CLOSE	VOLUME
Abacus Corp Res & Hdg A	0.008	0.008	0.008	0.008	15,000,000
Abacus Corp Res & Hdg B	0.008	0.008	0.008	0.008	23,000,000
Abacus Corp Res & Hdg B	470.0	470.0	455.0	455.0	210,000
Abacus Corp Res & Hdg B	0.53	0.54	0.53	0.54	1,438,000
Abacus Corp Res & Hdg B	0.028	0.028	0.028	0.028	6,200,000
Abacus Corp Res & Hdg B	3.8	3.8	3.6	3.65	2,750,000
Abacus Corp Res & Hdg B	0.235	0.235	0.235	0.235	1,400,000
Abacus Corp Res & Hdg B	0.009	0.009	0.009	0.009	162,000,000
Abacus Corp Res & Hdg B	1.1	1.1	1.04	1.04	5,334,000
Abacus Corp Res & Hdg B	2.24	2.24	2.24	2.24	64,000
Abacus Corp Res & Hdg B	1.1	1.1	1.06	1.06	20,000
Abacus Corp Res & Hdg B	1.2	1.3	1.2	1.26	55,000
Abacus Corp Res & Hdg B	5.3	5.3	5.3	5.3	102,137,000
Abacus Corp Res & Hdg B	3.65	3.65	3.65	3.65	4,509,000
Abacus Corp Res & Hdg B	1.6	1.6	1.6	1.6	5,000
Abacus Corp Res & Hdg B	7.6	7.7	7.5	7.7	707,000
Abacus Corp Res & Hdg B	0.215	0.215	0.215	0.215	500,000
Abacus Corp Res & Hdg B	0.28	0.28	0.28	0.28	2,000,000
Abacus Corp Res & Hdg B	0.012	0.012	0.012	0.012	10,000,000
Abacus Corp Res & Hdg B	0.21	0.21	0.21	0.21	1,500,000
Abacus Corp Res & Hdg B	0.15	0.155	0.15	0.15	1,124,750
Abacus Corp Res & Hdg B	0.85	0.85	0.85	0.85	100,000
Abacus Corp Res & Hdg B	0.72	0.73	0.72	0.73	40,000

PROPERTY	OPEN	FINANCIAL	LOW	CLOSE	VOLUME
Abacus Land Inc	14.75	15	14.25	14.25	12,358,000
Abacus Land Inc	0.39	0.39	0.39	0.39	240,000
Abacus Land Inc	1.35	1.38	1.32	1.34	5,897,000
Abacus Land Inc	0.96	0.96	0.96	0.96	70,000
Abacus Land Inc	0.3	0.32	0.3	0.32	2,720,000
Abacus Land Inc	1.82	1.82	1.82	1.82	12,604,000
Abacus Land Inc	0.22	0.22	0.215	0.215	760,000
Abacus Land Inc	0.73	0.73	0.69	0.69	44,300,000
Abacus Land Inc	0.69	0.69	0.68	0.68	700,000
Abacus Land Inc	0.03	0.031	0.03	0.03	3,600,000
Abacus Land Inc	0.68	0.68	0.68	0.68	1,200,000
Abacus Land Inc	1.98	1.9	1.74	1.76	17,135,000
Abacus Land Inc	3	3	3	3	20,000
Abacus Land Inc	0.007	0.0075	0.007	0.0075	55,000,000
Abacus Land Inc	0.007	0.0075	0.007	0.0075	58,000,000
Abacus Land Inc	0.27	0.27	0.26	0.26	300,000
Abacus Land Inc	0.59	0.62	0.58	0.6	2,510,000
Abacus Land Inc	1.86	1.86	1.74	1.82	132,550,000
Abacus Land Inc	0.27	0.28	0.26	0.27	50,000,000
Abacus Land Inc	0.28	0.28	0.27	0.27	280,000
Abacus Land Inc	0.13	0.13	0.13	0.13	3,500,000
Abacus Land Inc	1.7	1.7	1.7	1.7	200,000
Abacus Land Inc	11.25	11.75	11	11.5	624,900
Abacus Land Inc	0.34	0.34	0.32	0.32	5,872,000
Abacus Land Inc	1.7	1.8	1.7	1.8	1,720,000
Abacus Land Inc	0.125	0.125	0.12	0.12	13,520,000
Abacus Land Inc	0.125	0.125	0.12	0.12	3,670,000

TELECOMMUNICATIONS	OPEN	FINANCIAL	LOW	CLOSE	VOLUME
ABS-CBN Broadcasting Corp	14.5	15	14.5	14.5	397,700
ABS-CBN Broadcasting Corp	1.34	1.34	1.34	1.34	29,000

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY	OPEN	FINANCIAL	LOW	CLOSE	VOLUME
Digital Telecom Phils Inc	1040.0	1040.0	1025.0	1035.0	71,500
Digital Telecom Phils Inc	3.4	3.45	3.25	3.3	7,195,000
Digital Telecom Phils Inc	2270.0	2270.0	2150.0	2150.0	89,660

TRANSPORTATION SERVICES	OPEN	FINANCIAL	LOW	CLOSE	VOLUME
Asian Terminals Inc	3.35	3.05	3.05	3.05	110,000
Asian Terminals Inc	14.25	14.25	13.5	13.5	6,150,000
Asian Terminals Inc	0.95	0.96	0.95	0.96	200,000
Asian Terminals Inc	1.3	1.3	1.3	1.3	2,000

HOTEL & LEISURE	OPEN	FINANCIAL	LOW	CLOSE	VOLUME
Laguas & Resorts Corp	1.72	1.72	1.64	1.68	2,819,000
Laguas & Resorts Corp	3	3	3	3	5,300
Laguas & Resorts Corp	0.88	0.88	0.82	0.84	950,000

DIVERSIFIED SERVICES	OPEN	FINANCIAL	LOW	CLOSE	VOLUME
Macarissa Corp	2.2	2.32	2.14	2.26	3,718,000
Macarissa Corp	10.75	11	10.75	11	699,200

APPROVED	OPEN	FINANCIAL	LOW	CLOSE	VOLUME
Apex Mining Co Inc A	3	3.5	3	3.5	19,673,000
Apex Mining Co Inc A	2.95	3.6	2.95	3.55	9,856,000
Apex Mining Co Inc A	0.0085	0.0085	0.0085	0.0085	203,000,000
Apex Mining Co Inc A	8.1	8.1	7.9	7.9	4,027,000
Apex Mining Co Inc A	12.5	12.5	12.25	12.25	2,720,000
Apex Mining Co Inc A	1.34	1.34	1.34	1.34	265,000
Apex Mining Co Inc A	0.37	0.37	0.36	0.37	17,040,000
Apex Mining Co Inc A	0.41	0.41	0.39	0.4	12,500,000
Apex Mining Co Inc A	0.025	0.025	0.024	0.025	216,000,000
Apex Mining Co Inc A	0.028	0.028	0.028	0.028	86,700,000
Apex Mining Co Inc A	0.008	0.008	0.0075	0.0075	14,400,000
Apex Mining Co Inc A	4.15	4.2	4.05	4.2	13,754,000
Apex Mining Co Inc A	29.5	30	29.5	29.5	7,555,000
Apex Mining Co Inc A	0.41	0.41	0.38	0.41	438,000
Apex Mining Co Inc A	0.65	0.65	0.6	0.62	1,750,000

APPROVED	OPEN	FINANCIAL	LOW	CLOSE	VOLUME
Basic Consolidated Inc	0.28	0.28	0.28	0.28	2,610,000
Basic Consolidated Inc	0.011	0.012	0.011	0.011	265,000,000
Basic Consolidated Inc	0.012	0.012	0.012	0.012	74,500,000
Basic Consolidated Inc	1.26	1.3	1.18	1.3	2,391,000
Basic Consolidated Inc	1.1	1.2	1.1	1.2	2,391,000
Basic Consolidated Inc	1.1	1.2	1.1	1.2	1,815,200

APPROVED	OPEN	FINANCIAL	LOW	CLOSE	VOLUME
ABS-CBN Hldgs Corp (PDR)	15	15	15	15	344,800

WARRANTS, PDR, DEPOSIT RECEIPTS, ETC.	OPEN	FINANCIAL	LOW	CLOSE	VOLUME
ABS-CBN Hldgs Corp (PDR)	15	15	15	15	344,800

CURRENCIES	Unit	Equivalent	Unit	Equivalent
United States	Dollar	0.76411	1.00000	51.3920
Japan	Yen	0.007045	0.00958	0.4604
United Kingdom	Pound	1.462252	1.89400	95.5583
Hong Kong	Dollar	0.101450	0.126016	6.6304
Switzerland	Franc	0.60452	0.814399	41.8536
Canada	Dollar	0.707267	0.893351	46.2200

"We know
that God
raised the
Lord Jesus
from death.
He will
raise us to
life with
Jesus.
He will
present us,
along with
you, to
God."

2 Corinthians 4:14



FOR ME TO LIVE IS CHRIST
AND TO DIE IS GAIN
Philippians 1:21

Our Dearly Beloved
Inang Arseng

ARSENIA ROXAS CAPISTRANO

of Obando, Bulacan

Peacefully joined our Lord on May 5, 2006 at the age of 84

Her husband, Eliseo (†), loving children, Mel & Lily, Celing & Penny, Maria, Mercy & Eyo, Jan & Ellen, Senia & Noel and Josie & Leo, grandchildren, great grandchildren and other relatives express sincere appreciation to all those who, in countless ways, are comforting them in this hour of bereavement.

Her remains lie in state at the Capistrano residence in San Pascual, Obando, Bulacan.

Interment will be on Sunday, May 14, 2006 at the Zaldua Memorial Park, Obando, Bulacan, right after the 2:00 p.m. necrological services at Obando Central UMC, San Pascual, Obando, Bulacan.

The Maryknoll Sisters of St. Dominic

wish to announce the entrance into eternal life of

Sr. Miriam Thomas Thornton, M.M.

On May 7, 2006 at the age of 96

At the Maryknoll Sisters Center in New York

She had been a Maryknoll Sister for seventy-seven years. She was assigned to Maryknoll College in 1936 when it was still Maryknoll Normal School and spent fifty years of her missionary life in service to the school. It was her vision, in response to Vatican II, that saw the eventual transfer of the school into the hands of competent lay persons.

Sr. Miriam Thomas was among the Maryknoll Sisters who were interned at Los Baños during World War II

MESSAGE OF THANKS

We, the family and relatives of the late

LORINDA M. CARLOS

former Executive Director
of the Bureau of Local Government Finance
of the Department of Finance

who joined the Creator on 30 April 2006,

sincerely convey our deepest gratitude
and appreciation to all those who offered
Masses and prayers, sent flowers, visited,
and kept vigil, attended the funeral rites,
and offered us solace and comfort

In our moment of grief,

We also thank you for joining us
in remembering her, who in so many ways
has touched our lives forever.

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NOTICE TO THE PUBLIC

Please be informed that MR. CARLITO C. GALITA whose picture appears below has ceased to be connected in any capacity with AIRBORNE SECURITY SERVICE, INC effective November 17, 2005.



Any transactions entered into with this person from and after the date mentioned above shall not be honored and shall not be for the responsibility of the company.

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SEE CIO TAN

Peacefully joined her Creator
on May 5, 2006 at the age of 98.

Her loving children Calixtro (†), Ricardo, Jesus (†), Siuking, Narcisa, Leoncio, Caysing, Belena, Solaida and Raymond, together with the in-laws, grandchildren, great grandchildren request the pious readers to pray for the eternal repose of her soul.

Her remains lie in state at La Funeraria Paz, G. Araneta Avenue, Quezon City.

Interment will be on Friday, May 12, 2006, 9:00 a.m. at Heaven's Gate.

INES S. PEREZ

of Caganga, Pangasinan

Peacefully joined the Lord
on May 7, 2006 at the age of 98.

Her children Nene, Jr. and Mely, Nardo and Isang, Aling, Lily and Floren, Eloy and Vicky, Cleo and Toly, Luz and Iggy, Boy and Nena, relatives and friends request the pious readers to pray for the eternal repose of her soul.

Her remains lie in state at the Nacional Memorial Homes, G. Araneta Avenue, Quezon City.

Interment will be on Saturday, May 13, 2006 after the 9:00 a.m. Mass at Our Lady of Miraculous Medal, Proj. 4, Quezon City

LUCIO P. ESPINOZA, SR.

peacefully joined his Creator on May 8, 2006
at the age of 87

His loving wife Albina, and their children together with their spouses: Gay and Lindo, Ann and Boy, Cherrie and Jun, and Lucio Jr. and Heidi, and grandchildren: Kristin and Loi, Krisette, Jec-Jec, Joann, Camille and Gerard, Jeffrey, Alvin, Roseanne, Trisha, and Paolo, and great grandchildren: Krizlyn and Charles request the pious readers to pray for the eternal repose of his soul.

His remains lie in the St. Rose of Lima Parish Church in Sta. Rosa, Nueva Ecija.

Interment will be on Thursday, May 11, 2006, 8:00 a.m. at Sta. Rosa Cemetery.

NOTICE TO THE PUBLIC

We have been receiving information that there are people who are using AIRBORNE SECURITY SERVICE, INC. for the purpose of maligning its dignity and reputation to gain advantage for personal interest.

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Should you come across the identity of these people please report to our office immediately.

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NOTICE FOR PUBLICATION

In compliance with Section 5 of R.A. No. 8048, a notice is hereby served to the public that DIONITA G. GUDEN has filed with this Office a petition for change of first name from DELA to DIONITA in the Certificate of Live Birth of DELA A. GAMBOA who was born on December 16, 1956 at PURA, TARIAC and whose parents are ALFREDO GAMBOA and SUSANA AGANON. Any person adversely affected by said petition may file his written opposition within this office not later than May 19, 2006.

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City Civil Registrar

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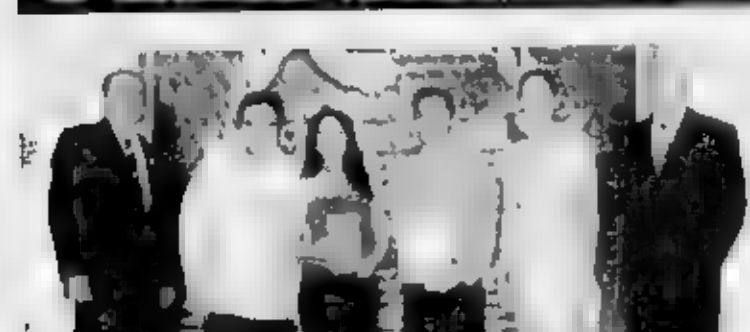
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Tel: 852 2910 loc. 110 Email: jeric.cupin@henrybutcher.com



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BULLETIN OF VACANT POSITIONS

In Compliance with RA 7041

HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT DIVISION

1. HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT OFFICER III -

Item No. OMB-HRM03-15-2003, SG 18

Education: Bachelor's degree; Experience: 2 years of relevant experience; Training: 8 hours of relevant training; Eligibility: Career Service Professional / Second Level

Applicants should submit within ten (10) calendar days from the date of this publication to the Human Resource Management Division at the above address, the following requirements:

- 1) A letter stating the position applied for
- 2) Fully accomplished Personal Data Sheet (CSC Form 212);
- 3) 1" x 1" picture (colored)
- 4) * Bar/Board Rating or CSC Certificate of Eligibility
- 5) * Transcript of Records;
- 6) * Certificates of Seminars / Training attended;
- 7) * Service Records or Certificates from previous/present employers stating the positions assumed and corresponding actual duties and responsibilities (if applicable)
- 8) * Performance Appraisal Reports for the last two rating periods (for current government employees only);
- 9) Statement duly signed by the applicant as to any relative(s) within the fourth degree of consanguinity or affinity, currently employed with the Office of the Ombudsman.

* Where photocopies are filed, the documents must be certified as true copies by the proper authorities or the applicant may present the originals to the Human Resource Management Officer for comparison with the photocopies

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More investments going to Mindanao, Neda says

CalEnergy to turn over Leyte plant to PNOC

By Vicente S. Labro
PDI Visayas Bureau

ORMOC CITY—A 130-MEGA-watt geothermal power plant in Leyte built under the build-operate-transfer (BOT) scheme will soon be turned over by American firm California Energy to state-run Philippine National Oil Co.-Energy Development Corp. (PNOC-EDC).

Paul Aquino, PNOC-EDC president and chief executive officer, said the ceremonial turnover of the Upper Mahiao Geothermal Plant was set on June 15.

But the formal turnover was set on June 25, he said, to coincide with PNOC-EDC's 30th anniversary and the 10th anniversary of the power plant's operation.

"It's the first BOT to be turned over to the Philippine government," Aquino told the *Inquirer* recently at the PNOC-EDC administration complex here.

Aquino said that after the turnover, "we will now own it and operate it because we were the ones paying (for the power plant)."

The Upper Mahiao power plant is located inside the vast Leyte Geothermal Production Field (LGPFF) here.

Aquino stressed that the most important thing was that PNOC-EDC would no longer pay rent for the plant, "because the rental is the one that has been killing us."

Upper Mahiao was said to hold the record of being the world's biggest geothermal plant using the geothermal combined cycle units (GCCU) technology in a single powerhouse.

Located in Sitio Upper Mahiao in Kananga, Leyte, the Upper Mahiao geothermal power plant started commercial operations on June 25, 1996.

Aquino also disclosed that other BOT power projects—the Mahanagdong A, Mahanagdong B, Malitbog and all Ormoc plants as well as the Mindanao Apo I—are also to be turned over next year.

The Mindanao Apo II will follow in 2009.

"So, everything will be with us in 2009," he said.

Aquino said PNOC-EDC projected that by 2011, the agency would have "free cash."

"This means we can [start giving] cash dividends to the government," he said.

While it has the most geothermal plants under its wing, the government run firm continues to invest in exploration.

Aquino said one possible site is San Juan, Southern Leyte.

Aquino said PNOC-EDC was "confident that the Southern Leyte project will be a go."

But he added that the Southern Leyte power project would again be dependent on many factors, like the Transmision Corp. (Transco) having line connection to Mindanao to justify putting up the power plant.

Aquino, however, said that for PNOC-EDC's part, it wanted to push through with the project to help the people affected by the recent landslides in Southern Leyte.

He added they might even advance the project because of the tragedy.

Agency says rise due to improving peace and order situation

COTABATO CITY—INVESTMENTS IN TWO war-torn regions in Mindanao have been increasing as peace and order conditions continue to improve, officials said.

The National Economic Development Authority (Neda) reported that for the first quarter of the year, Central Mindanao posted a 60-percent increase in investments compared to the same period last year.

Lourdes Damaso-Lim, Neda 12 director, said the region, which suffered from recent skirmishes between the military and Moro rebels, recorded a total of P4.4 billion in fresh capital for the first three months of the year.

Last year's investment figure for the period was only P2.7 billion, she said.

Central Mindanao is made up of this city, the cities of Koronadal, General Santos, Kidapawan and Tacurong and the provinces of North and South Cotabato, Sultan Kudarat and Sarangani.

Lim said the impressive figure was due to the establishment of the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Park here, the coming of medical transcription companies, marine dry dock facilities and a shopping mall.

"A huge cold storage plant for marine and aquatic products, a mango processing facility and a mountain tourist resort were the investment contributions derived from Sarangani, North and South Cotabato," Lim said.

"The prospects of much better exports of marine and agricultural products loom with these new-found investors," Ibrahim Guimadel, director of the Department of Trade and Industry in Central Mindanao, said.

Guimadel said last year's export earnings of \$430.7 million, which was 13.2 percent higher than the previous year, was expected to grow further with the coming of fresh investments into the fishery sector.

As with Central Mindanao, the Au-

tonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) is also experiencing a substantial growth in capital inflow, according to DTI-ARMM Secretary Ishak Mastura.

Mastura said that for the first quarter this year, at least P146 million in fresh funds were poured into the region.

Like Central Mindanao, the ARMM, composed of Maguindanao, Lanao del Sur, Basilan, Sulu and Tawi-Tawi and the city of Marawi, is considered a hotbed of Moro insurgency.

ARMM Gov. Zaldy Ampatuan said he expected the investment figure to increase in the coming months as efforts to push the region as an alternative investment destination was being intensified.

Ampatuan, who flew to Saudi Arabia with President Macapagal-Arroyo, said he was expecting Saudi investors to consider the region for their expansion projects. *Charlie C. Señase, PDI Mindanao Bureau*



BINATBATAN FESTIVAL
Performers show their dancing skills along historic Crisologo Street Vigan City. The festival got its name from the loco term, batbatin, or separating cotton balls from the seeds of the local fruit tree, kapas sanglay. The cotton balls are then spun and used to weave abel iloko.
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4-month car sales down 3%

By Abigail L. Ho

VEHICLE SALES IN THE FIRST FOUR MONTHS of the year dropped 3 percent to 29,329 units from last year's 30,246 units, due mainly to the usual April sales slump and temporary stock and supply problems caused by shipment delays.

According to the Chamber of Automotive Manufacturers of the Philippines Inc., April sales dropped 12.7 percent against March figures to 7,264 units.

Camp president Elizabeth Lee said the decline in April was slowed by the introduction of new models, as well as promos and other marketing activities by the assemblers.

Overall sales would likely increase in the May-June period, she said.

April is usually a slow vehicle sales month as money is set aside for tax payments and school tuition.

Commercial vehicle sales, which registering a 1.9-percent decline in the first four months of the year to 18,435 units, still accounted for the bulk of overall vehicle sales during the period at 63 percent.

Sales in April alone plunged 11.8 percent against March figures across all segments, which included light commercial vehicles (LCV), Asian utility vehicle (AUV), trucks and buses.

Japanese manufacturers accounted for bulk of January-April sales, led by Toyota Motor Philippines Corp. with 11,549 units sold and a market share of 39.38 percent.

Following Toyota are Honda Cars Philippines Inc. with 3,683 units sold and a market share of 12.56 percent, Mitsubishi Motors Philippines Inc. with 3,623 units sold and a market share of 12.35 percent, and Isuzu Philippines Corp. with 2,640 units sold and a market share of 9 percent.

Seaoil sets terms for ethanol plan

SEAOIL PETROLEUM CORP SAID IT WOULD only push through with its plan to put up its own ethanol facility when the biofuels bill becomes law.

Seaoil president Gianni Yu said the company's decision was contingent on the passage of the law on biofuels as this would create a market for gasoline blended with ethanol.

The pending biofuels bill will make mandatory the sale and use of gasoline blended with 5-percent ethanol and diesel with 1-percent coco methyl ester (CME).

Seaoil was the first oil firm in the country to sell gasoline pre-blended with ethanol directly from its pumps.

Yu said that since the launch of its ethanol-blended gasoline in August 2005 in selected stations in Metro Manila and in October 2005 in all its stations nationwide, the oil firm had so far sold 2.5 million liters of the product.

Ethanol-blended gasoline currently accounts for 5 percent of the company's total revenue, he said.

Based on the demand trend since Seaoil launched its ethanol-blended gasoline, he said the oil firm would need between 5 million and 7 million liters of ethanol a year.

New shipments are expected to arrive in the country from Brazil by next month, he said.

Without a local ethanol facility, he said Seaoil would continue depending on Brazil, the world's most cost-efficient ethanol producer, for supply.

British firm Bronzeoak Ltd., through local arm Bronzeoak Philippines Ltd., has tied up with National Development Corp. to establish the San Carlos Bio-Energy Inc. plant, an integrated facility that will be able to produce some 100,000 liters of bio-ethanol a day.

It will also have a cane milling plant with a throughput capacity of 1,500 metric tons of cane daily, as well as a co-generation power plant that will produce 4 MW of electricity.

Bronzeoak Philippines will also invest P1.5 billion to bankroll the construction of a dedicated ethanol plant in Southern Bukidnon.

Abigail L. Ho



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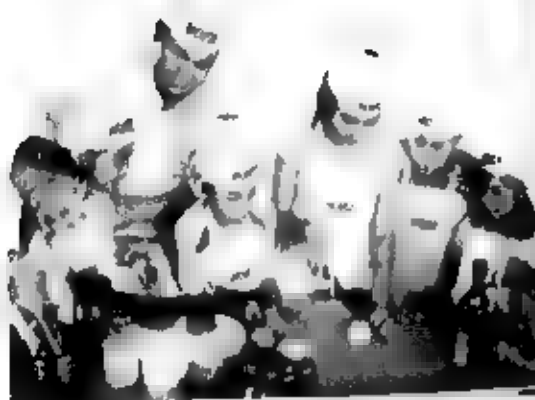
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LIFESTYLE

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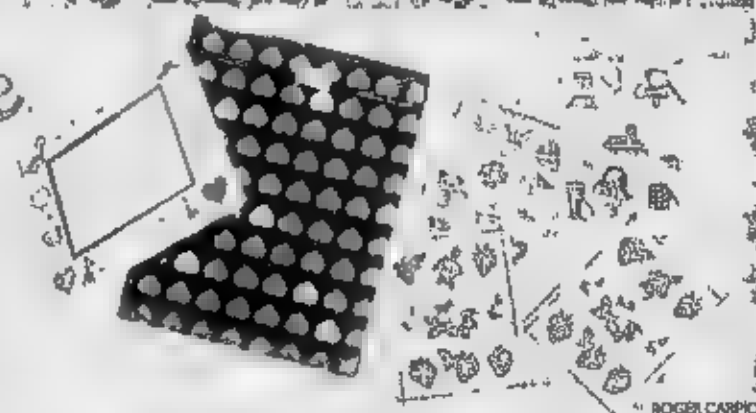
Mother's Day scrapbook

DEAR MOMS,

We wouldn't be here if it weren't for you. We believe that a day isn't enough to celebrate all the good things you've done for us, and so we've decided to turn Mother's Day into Mother's Week. (Or maybe even Mother's Year?) We asked our writers and readers to tell us about you and how much your presence has changed their lives, our lives.

We chose our favorites and included them in a special scrapbook lovingly made for you.

PS.
Our friends from Merit have special gifts for the writers and the moms who inspired the scrapbook entries—they have Scrapbook sets and picture frames for preserving bonding moments with mom. If your entry was published, e-mail us your full name, contact information and address and we'll tell you how you can claim your prize.



Wonder Woman

By Angela V. Ignacio
26UI Correspondent

MY GRANDPA CALLS US the "Tres Marias." Our relatives have nicknamed us "The Bignacios" (and ironically so, given our oh-so-slender build).

But most people just mistakenly refer to us as "sisters." My sister and I can't really blame them, though. Looking at my mom, you'd never guess she has a daughter who's 23 and another one who's turning 20 in a few months. In fact, if I had a peso for every time someone would say to my mom, "Ay ma'am, anak niyo po sila? Parang magkakapatid lang kayo!", I'd probably need a piggy bank the size of Bangko Sentral.

To say that my mom looks way younger than most moms her age is an understatement. The only wrinkles she has are in the corners of her eyes when she smiles. She has naturally perfect legs that cosmetically altered women would die for. Plus, she agonizes over bulges and extra pounds when there aren't any (and doesn't believe you when you say so).

While strangers only see the physical aspect, the peo-



ple close to us see her as hip and happenin' for a lot of other reasons. When she paid for my sister's tattoo for her 17th birthday, my sister's friends thought my mom was the coolest. When, during my high school years, I'd ask my mom what my curfew was and she'd say I had none, my friends all wanted her to adopt them right away. But that's not even half of it.

She goes out on gimmicks with her friends more often than I do, and it's not because I'm a self-proclaimed hermit. She knows all our boy troubles (or utter lack thereof). She listens to NU 107 and knows that Pedicab

is not just a mode of transportation. We watch "Prison Break" for the same bald, hazel/green-eyed reason (and the story isn't half bad, either).

We bicker over the silliest little things, borrow clothes from each other, listen to the same music, and go guy hunting for each other (or at least we try to do it in secret).

Sometimes I'm beginning to think she's just a much older ate than a mom. But as chummy as our relationship is with her, we never forget that she's the one who brought us into the world and raised us to become who we are now.

Our mom has done so

much for us that it's only fair that we repay her, even in our own little ways. If she feels sick, we'll take care of her. If she still wants to learn how to swim, we'll teach her. If certain people oppress her just because she's better than they are, we'll kick their behinds and fight for the credit she deserves.

She's been through a lot, and we make sure we're there for her every step of the way, just as she's always been for us. We can only hope that she's as proud of us as we are of her.

To our mother, our gorgeous ate, our very own Wonder Woman—thank you so much for everything. You rock!

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Pasasalamat

By Arishka Nicole T. Abiog
26UI Contributor

Isang libo't isang mukha ang nasusilayan ko bawat araw samu't-saring mga emosyon pag-itsa, kalungkutan, kaligayahan, sa dami ng pagkakataong lumuha, nadapa at nagdusa nariyan siya, kahit buhay ay di-perpekto yumayakap at kumakalinga madalas nalitimutan ko dahil nariyan ang mga kaibigan ngunit sa tawag nabibigong heto siya't pilit akong binubuo sa bawat pagkakamali at sa kawalan ng pag-asa

ang kanyang mga agiti ang sa aka'y nagbibigay sigla, malayo pa ang lalakbayin ko ngunit pilit nyang pinagagan ang bawat papasanin ko sa aking daraanan, hugit sa lahat ng ito siya ang dahilan ng aking buhay; isang regalang di mapapanatayan ng kahit ano pa man, sa iyo, aking "mama" kulang pa ang pasasalamat, kailanma'y di ko mahihigitan ang iyong pagmamahal at sakripisyo. Maligayang Araw'ng Mga Mapagkakalinga't Mapagmahal na Inal I Love You, Ma!

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By Niño Mark M. Sablan
2bU1 Correspondent

UNASHAMEDLY ADMIT I AM A MAMA'S boy. I have no qualms about showing my affections for her. We can have conversations about everything, even the touchiest topics. We can go out and have loads of fun doing absolutely nothing. I can hug her. Kiss her. Tell her I love her. Especially if she were here.

My Mom is in the United States, working on her papers so she can live there forever. She wants us to join her soon.

During my formative years, my mother was a huge presence, the way all mothers supposedly are. She'd help me with my assignments, dress me up for school, and introduce me to tons of books and toys. We shared so much happy times together that I'd bawl my eyeballs out whenever she had to leave for work.

And then I had a brother. And a sister. Then all of a sudden, she packed her bags and went back to her parents' house, tagging along our little sister, but leaving me and my brother behind with our dad.

Too young to understand the complexity of the whole situation, all I came to know was that my favorite girl on earth had transferred to a different planet.

Thankfully, weekends were spent with her so all the fun moments were revived, albeit with a certain time limit. During weeknights, we'd call one another, update each other about what had happened that day and end the conversation with "goodbye, I love you."

And then acne mushroomed all over my face. I reached puberty, got sucked into school's shallow society, and my favorite girl in the world got replaced by other girls and guys. School—and all its inhabitants, politics and drama—became my life. It became my focus. I was so into it that I almost forgot my mom. Blame it on school. Blame it on the little distance between us.

And then I received a bit of news that made me want to stop school so I could be with her every day instead. She was going abroad for work. It was contractual, a couple of years or so, plus she'd get to visit us, too. There were a

couple of good things that went along with it—packages, dollars, you know—but at the end of the day, I felt like it was a rotten idea.

For a little while there, I thought: How could she leave us just to earn some crisp green bills? It's not as if she couldn't get a job in the Philippines. So, yeah, there was some bit of anger and bitterness there.

So she hopped into a plane and zoomed somewhere.

The first few days were difficult, but one had to cope! I kept myself busy. Too busy, actually.

Before I knew it, she was back. Before I knew it, she was leaving again. For another job. In another country.

Before I knew it, it had become her lifestyle, zooming in and out of our lives.

Always on my mind

So right now she's stuck in the States and, thanks to high technology, I'm missing her less. But don't get me wrong. I still miss her a lot.

When we discovered the joys of instant messaging and e-mail, we did it almost every day. And then things came up so we ended up doing it less often. And then it turned to a weekly thingy. And now we go online monthly.

It's pretty ugly, come to think of it. But I guess we know we don't need to go online everyday just to know we're there for each other. Because we are here for one another, e-mail or no e-mail.

I have to admit there was a time when I was so busy living my life that I didn't get to even think of her for some months. And the moment I realized that, it really hurt me. Now, I make sure she's always on my mind, and that I let her know this.

Once in a while, I remember my mom and how much I miss her. Without warning, my chest gets crumpled inside and I break into tears. I have lost count but I know we've been far from one another for a very long time now. So I make sure I let her feel how much I love her—even only through forwarded, sappy e-mail or offline messages.

I love my mother much. I guess all children do. I love her for so many things.

For loving and accepting the weird child that I am.

For making me hungry for knowledge and creativity and learning.

For teaching me how to face the world, but letting me learn from my own mistakes at the

There was a time when my mom was jobless. I was in college back then. Asking allowance from her was always a task, but she always managed to give me some. She even helped out her younger sister's hair accessories business just to be able to earn to give me money for school.

Every time I think of that, I melt. I feel jelly-like. I work so hard right now so that I can take care of her in the future. Give her what she gave me. Give her more than she wants, needs and expects. She gave me so much, I think it's just fair for me to do the same.

Lessons

Being away from my mom has taught me loads of lessons.

It has taught me to always have a good relationship with my mother. Fights may be there, yeah, but I have also learned not to let the sun go down without us patching things up. We shouldn't hurt the ones we love, after all.

I have also been reminded that life is too short and that there should be no room for regrets. This is why I always let my mother know how much I value her. I don't want to regret not being able to say certain stuff to her. I don't want things to be too late. I don't want to regret my actions or nonaction.

I have also learned that distance shouldn't be a hindrance to a relationship. Challenges like distance should just make the relationship stronger. And challenges should just make us exert more effort.

So, if you'll excuse me now, I still have some mother and-son relationship to work

E-mail the author at marksablan_2bU1@yahoo.com



Inform how raise seven children

By Paula Tanada
2bU1 Contributor

BACK IN THE OLD DAYS, having seven children and all of them delivered by Cesarean section was like, oh my gawd, you're kidding!

Saying we're seven siblings sometimes makes me feel like we qualify for the circus or "Believe It or Not," because people tend to ask about how my parents got through it all. But telling their story makes me proud of my mom, Joy.

By the fourth child (me), my mom's doctor said that another Cesarean birth would already be life-threatening. Of course my mom made her own rules and gave birth to three more beautiful children. (Damn it, I was supposed to be the youngest).

By the seventh child, her doctor said she only had a 50-percent chance of survival. She even received the last rites from a priest. She never said it, but I think seeing all seven of her children made up for all the blood she lost in the operating room.

In my younger years, my mom was a full-time executive, but she still managed to have time for us. My clearest memories of her were that she worked a lot and there was never a day I did not see her pray for at least an hour and go to mass. I don't know exactly how to classify our growing-up lifestyle because my mom (and dad) were neither really traditional nor modern parents.

Still, most people would classify us as traditional because we were tight-knit and

seemed sheltered. But the truth was, we were hardly restrained from doing what we wanted—except watching, listening to or reading "Sweet Valley High," "The Simpsons" and Madonna. Aside from those, we could (though not encouraged to) party, dress the way we wanted, smoke and drink alcohol. Despite her confusing parenting style, we turned out okay, though.

Ate (Jance), 26, turned out to be an addict for unusual sports, getting into scuba diving, mountaineering and now underwater hockey.

Kuya (Carlos), 22, is the most music-minded. He joined 10 million other bands before ending up as the lead guitarist for Up Dharma Down.

Ate Jenny, 21, likes shopping and Math (eew) and is determined to climb the corporate ladder.

Regina, 17, hopes to be a doctor someday, while dancing (literally) her way in UP Manila.

Gabby, 15, has a passion for sports and even thinks of soccer as part of his future even though his height sometimes gets in the way (hahaha).

And Raffy, 13, wants to do better in the violin and gravitates toward any computer he sees.

My mom isn't the quintessential "best friend" mom or even the traditional housewife mom. She is a little bit of everything to all of us kids. I'm really proud of her because she was able to handle all seven of us. And I have yet to figure out how she did it.

By Maria Miniano
2bU1 Correspondent

MY MOTHER HAS ALWAYS been terribly particular when it comes to cleanliness and neatness. She cringes when she sees my messy room and tells my older brother to stop smoking "because he smells."

She constantly reminds my younger sister to keep her hair out of her face, and my younger brother to keep his toys inside the cabinet. She makes sure our hands are washed before we start eating, and she hates it when we walk barefoot around the house. And don't even get me started on her serious obsession with Purinse and Wet Ones.

Of course, like normal sons and daughters, we resist, not knowing that we don't even stand a chance. A mother has a special kind of power over her children, such that it is not only inevitable that we understand where she is coming from, but we eventually find that these little quirks have actually become a part of who we are.

So it is not uncommon for a kid to wake up one day and re-

alize that he has become his mother. (Oh nooo.)

So although my siblings and I are far from being as OC as our mother is, we would have to admit that she has successfully gotten to us. I would like to think that we reflect her love for cleanliness and neatness through the persons we have become: We try to keep our lives clutter-free, we try not to swear too much, we try to be honest and trustworthy, we try to keep our promises and stick to our schedules, we try to value simplicity—to be content with what we have and with each other.

Maybe this is just me, making excuses for the fact that my room still looks like a disaster area, my older brother still hasn't quit smoking, my younger sister still sports the "bruh" look, and my younger brother's toys are still strewn all over the floor.

Or maybe all moms are naturally clever like that—teaching us how to be good boys and girls just by telling us to wash our hands and wear our tulle.

Happy Mother's Day, Mom. My! We love you!

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By AJ Fernandez
26U Contributor

"Be humble."
"Don't be materialistic."
"Love your family."
"Do not be vengeful."
"Fight for the one you love."

MY MOTHER USED TO TELL ME these all the time. She had a hard time with me while I was growing up because I proved to be a difficult child. Her words of wisdom did not mean anything to me then, but now that I am a young adult, I finally appreciated them.

Our mother single-handedly raised my siblings and me when our father passed away in 1991. She was only 30 then, a soldier's young widow.

I knew it was very hard for her to deal with our father's death, but she was a fighter. In addition to facing the challenges of being a widow, she had to face the extra challenge of dealing with me since we did not get along well.

It was my grandmother who raised me. She doted on me. I was a spoiled brat. I saw my mother every day because our house and my grandparents' were within walking distance from each other but she was like a stranger to me. I did not know what the word "mother" meant. I only saw her as the woman who made my life miserable. She was a disciplinarian and I was a brat—not a good combination.

Since my grandparents had to move to another place when I was 10, my mother "claimed" me back. During this transition, I saw my mother in a new light. I felt that she cared for me and that she loved me. It was then that I learned what "mother" meant.



ILLUSTRATION BY ALBERT RODRIGUEZ

She taught me many things—how to cook rice, how to change bedcovers and pillowcases, how to properly apply floor wax, how to scrub the floor until it shone. These are simple things that delighted me and I took them all in. She was a great teacher; she patiently explained to me the details as if each chore was an art form.

As I got to know how wonderful my mother was, I learned to respect and love her. I used to joke that my love for her was not love at first sight; it developed over time, that was why it was stronger and deeper. We used to laugh at it, but I meant every word.

However, when I was in my teens, I became a rebel. No, I did not drink, smoke, tried illegal drugs or hooked up with bad peers. What I did was to stop telling her the things that mattered to her—how I was doing, what I was feeling. I built a wall around myself.

They say it is a phase that teenagers go through; it is normal. I wish it did not happen.

Heart attack

Then she had a stroke. That was my wake-up call. I regretted the times I treated her badly. I vowed

never to hurt her again. I wanted to give her all the love I could.

I tightly embraced my mother when I saw her at the hospital. I did not want to let go. I was very scared that day. I feared that I would be losing her soon.

My mom had temporary paralysis and for weeks, maybe months, she was not able to move her left arm. She underwent therapy.

I was going through her things the other day and I saw the beautiful green balls that she practiced on to strengthen the grip on her left hand (she lost it when she had the stroke). One of her friends gave her the balls. They were made of metal but were covered with a glass-like material.

They were also designed with stars and produced a chime-like sound when rolled. When I saw the balls the other day, I noticed that one had a chip on it. I could not help myself so I cried, thinking she might have dropped it as she struggled during her therapy.

When she was strong enough to walk, she exercised every day. She walked around the house in her Nike shoes. I thought that was funny and sad at the same time. It was funny because she could go from one end of the house to another in 22 steps (yes, I counted them). It was sad because every time she walked, I was reminded of her suffering.

After the stroke, she walked differently. I often told her that she walked with a bounce. We would laugh, but behind our laughter was the fear of what might happen when she suffers another attack.

In spite of what happened, she was very cheerful, she was thankful that God gave her a chance.

Aside from the superficial changes in my mother, other things have

changed. Weekly, she sent groceries to Baguio for my sister and me. She did not use to do that.

We checked on each other every day. I remember when I told her I was depressed. I was having another bout of identity crisis then. I wanted to tell my mother about it because I needed her strength for me to get through. After her stroke, we clung to each other as if we were each other's lifelines.

I was having fun at school (it was University Week) when I got a call from my grandmother. I did not understand a word she said because she was sobbing, but I knew it was about my mother. I cried right there at the lobby, in front of the whole school. I did not care. My mother was dead.

What I felt must have been similar to what my mother felt when my father passed away. The pain of losing the person you love most was indescribable and indefinable. But my mother was a strong woman. She tackled parenthood on her own no matter the challenges. When she passed away, I found myself in the same situation she found herself in when my father died.

Now I have to take care of my younger siblings. It is a tough job, I know, but it is no tougher than I am. My mother has taught me to be strong in circumstances such as this. "Have faith in God," she had told me.

My mother may not have lived long, but the 43 years she spent here on earth were well-lived. She was a good person. She showered the people she cared for with love and affection. It was no wonder that one of her favorite songs was James Taylor's "Shower the People." When she loved, she did not hold back; she gave everything.

Happy Mother's Day, Nanay.

By Amy

A WOMAN OF POISE AND SOPHISTICATION, I assure you my mother is not.

In fact, she can be quite the extreme. A perennial "servant" in the kitchen, she polices your almost every move, always ready to remind you of what dessert is available when you're done with the main course.

A driver she is not. In spite of this, she is forever obsessing about automobile matters such as parking, car keys and insurance.

Because of life's never-ending difficulties, she sees the world as a half-empty glass.

Thus, her occasional outbursts of craziness do not come as a surprise.

In spite of my list of "complaints" about her, I can't help but go back to her and be by her side at the end of the day.

When I was hospitalized twice, she was the only person who was with me the whole time.

She is the one person I love the most.

She is my guardian angel, my best friend, she is my one and only mom.

Happy Mother's Day, Anai! From your daughter Amy

By Freda

Celebrate your beauty and feel the wind that propels you to impossible goals. Stand on tiptoes flitting and dancing from cloud to cloud on wondrous thoughts. Explore your mind and find within the joys of your soul's priceless treasures. Celebrate your beauty and be not ashamed. You are woman. Mother of Earth. Giver of life. Celebrate. And be known.

ness from her. We told her it was okay if she wanted to sleep and rest and we'd just be there by her side. She fell asleep less than five minutes after we told her that which was amazing because she hadn't been able to sleep well the past weeks. It was like she was just waiting for us to tell her it was all right to go.

Mom passed away peacefully in my arms at 9:02 p.m., Sunday, May 29, 2005, surrounded by her family. For that I am very thankful. She didn't suffer in the end. She just slept and never woke up. It was the way she wanted to go.

Strongest person

May 5, 2006. My mother was the strongest person I've known in my lifetime. From the moment we learned that she had breast cancer in 1997, she was pillar of strength.

After her mastectomy, she was on remission for four years. Had she gone five years without recurrence, it meant her chances of being cancer-free were in the upper 90 percent.

But two months before the fifth year, mom had a recurrence. She underwent three cycles of chemotherapy and 38 days of radiation therapy. It was three months of excruciating pain, with bouts of nausea, extreme exhaustion and appetite loss. She lost at least 20 pounds during that period, which she regained after the sessions.

Mom was in remission again for two years, but the cancer was stubborn and she underwent another six cycles of chemotherapy and 30 days of radiation therapy.

Mom was cancer-free for a year, but needed another round of chemotherapy because the cancer metastasized to her other breast. There were also indications that it had spread to other parts of her body, like the back of her skull and the lower right part of her lung. That meant she needed another cycle of high-dose chemotherapy.

Anyone who could endure three cycles of chemotherapy and do it again for another 12 cycles is not only strong physical-

ly, but mentally.

She was also going to work on the periods between chemo sessions, even if she didn't need to. She wanted to go to work to take her mind off the cancer, because she said that when her mind was idle, it just gave her time to think about it.

Beautiful person

I wanted to pay tribute to my mother, Divine Sales, not only because she was a pillar of strength, but also because she was the most supportive, loving best friend, wife, mother, shopping partner, cook, therapist and all-around beautiful person I have ever known.

I miss everything about her, her laughter, her smile, her voice, her cooking, the hugs and kisses, the way she smelled, the girl talk we had before going to bed every night, how she got excited planning our Christmas reunions and summer outings. I miss our shopping sprees, our food tripping, and the talks we used to have in the car, on the way home from work. I miss everything. Yes, even the sermons I used to get when I screwed up, and how she would hugged me right after.

My mom and I may not have had the perfect mother-daughter relationship, but I wouldn't trade her for anyone in the world. We used to have our fights because I was stubborn and we were so alike that we tended to clash, but we had the greatest time together.

I came to know her better when I accompanied her to all her doctor's appointments, chemotherapy and radiation sessions and lab tests. I came to see mom as a woman and not just as a mother. I knew her fears and I admired her more when she confronted those fears head on.

It's been almost a year since she passed away and not a day goes by when I don't think about her. A lot has changed, my siblings and I grew up a lot and I know my dad misses her every day. We've had challenges and I know there's more to come, but now that we have our own guardian angel guiding us, everything will be all right.

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By Jennie Sales

JUNE 17, 2005. IT'S BEEN ALMOST three weeks since mom passed away and I still can't fully express what I feel. Let me rephrase that. I know what I want to say, but it's all jumbled up in my head. I can't find the right words. There's just too much going on inside.

Mom's passing was bittersweet. We're grieving her loss but at the same time we are happy because she feels no more pain, her suffering has ended and she's now in a better place.

No matter how many times I tell myself that she's in a better place, it doesn't completely fill the void she left in my heart. I do know that one day the pain will go away and I won't have to cry myself to sleep. It has to end, because I know she wouldn't want me to be like that. I have lots of wonderful memories of mom that will last me a

lifetime, but there's nothing better than having her right here with us.

I admit it's hard not having mom around. We've been so used to having her here in every aspect of our lives, that we greatly feel her loss. Even during the times her body was weak, her mind and spirit were at their finest.

My responsibilities have naturally broadened since I'm the eldest, which sometimes make me feel like I'm the mom now. But no matter how hard the task seems to be, I will try my best to live up to mom's expectations. After all, she taught us well. She prepared us for the eventuality of her loss, although even if we seemed like the best prepared persons around, when that time comes, no one really is.

Cathartic

I remember her telling us to let her go, when her vitals started getting tachy. I was the one who asked if I could talk to the doctor because I had a feeling that mom's condition was deteriorating and I wanted to

Mom's passing was bittersweet. We're grieving her loss but we're also happy because she feels no more pain.

know what our options were.

The first doctor I talked to was the kidney doctor, who told me mom's blood gases were very high and we should think about getting her dialyzed within the next few days. I was surprised because mom was admitted for having fluid in her lungs (which had already been drained) and here was this doctor telling me she needed a dialy-

I immediately said no to the dialysis, even if I hadn't asked my dad and my siblings. I don't want to put her through any more pain and I knew that mom wouldn't want it, too. The doctor said they were going to give her medicines to try to lessen the blood gases in mom's body, but the effects would only be temporary.

When I got inside the room, my sister and mom's sisters Nany Lita and Tita Belle surrounded mom, and she was calling out our deceased grandparents' names. She had a very beautiful smile on her face, her aura was different and I couldn't see a hint of the pain and discomfort I knew she felt

before I left the room. She waved her hands, smiled and called out the name of our uncle, Nany's husband, who passed away last year.

Around 6 p.m., mom's heartbeat became erratic and her oxygen levels dropped further. At the same time, the nurses had difficulty getting her blood pressure. It was then that we felt mom's time was almost up. My dad, my siblings and I surrounded her bed and told her everything we ever wanted to tell her. She couldn't speak because of her oxygen mask, but we communicated with gestures, loving looks and kisses.

My sister and I alternated sitting in bed with mom, her head nestled on our shoulders, while dad and my brother held her hands. We told her it was okay to leave, because we know how much she has suffered from this sickness. We would miss her but we'd be fine because we knew she'd be our angel.

The moment we told her that, I felt calm

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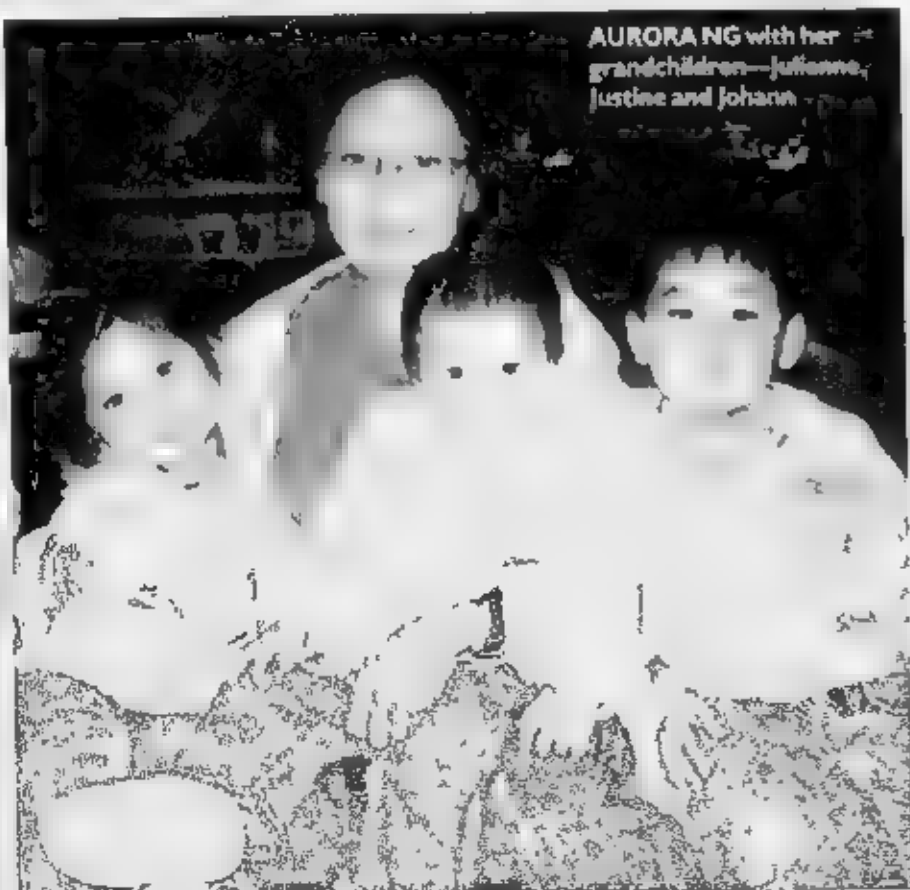
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To be you

Another annual martyr



AURORA NG with her grandchildren—Justine and Johann

By Jeanette
26/7 Contributor

DEAR MOMMY,

I've heard people say you're so lucky, having raised two fine daughters (me included) who have turned out so well.

Jo and I both enjoy thriving careers, are married with beautiful children and lead comfortable lives. But now that I'm a mother myself, I'd say luck has nothing to do with it.

Being a mom is hard work. You're on call 24 hours a day and your family expects you to be able to do anything and everything, from solving mathematical equations to sewing buttons to fixing the broken sink.

Looking back, I don't think we adequately showed our appreciation, and

while I have been trying to correct this in recent years, I know I still have a long way to go. I'm hoping this letter will help make up for my shortcomings.

So thank you, thank you, thank you—for being the mother that I can only hope to be. When I look back at all the wonderful things that have happened to me, I have to say that you deserve most, if not all the credit.

Someday, when my Justine and Justine become mothers, I can only pray they will look at me with a tenth of the love and respect I have for you.

Where does motherhood end and martyrdom begin? I wouldn't know, because in your case the lines are completely blurred.

Happy Mother's Day!



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By Gmeleen Faye B. Tomboc
26/7 Correspondent

I NEVER REALIZED HOW IMPORTANT my mom was until I went off to college. Sure, I appreciated that she was always there to go up on stage and pin ribbons on me during school recognition rites, and to applaud me whenever I acted in school plays.

But I was 16 years old and dead-set on living in a dormitory to escape curfews and the never-ending remarks about my messy room.

One week into college, I realized it was not quite the bed of roses I had imagined. But whenever I ran into these difficult times, I always knew where to go. I'd pack my bags and head home for the weekend.

Home was where my mom, dad and sister welcomed me with hugs and kisses, the smell of my favorite meals wafting from the kitchen where my mom had been cooking for hours.

When I took higher studies, things were more difficult. My weekend visits became less frequent, and the schoolwork was infinitely more demanding. On one such particularly depressing day, I failed an exam, burned the rice I was cooking, and noticed that my hair had started thinning out from all that stress.

You might call my problems frivolous, but I had never felt so alone in my life, sitting in that dorm room and feeling as if it was me against the world. I don't know exactly how it happened, but suddenly I realized I didn't have to face all my problems alone. I couldn't run home the way I could always do so when I was a kid, but why was I wallowing in my sorrows when my family was just a bus ride or a

phone call away?

And so with the wonders of technology, I sent an SMS to my mom telling her about my day. She immediately sent over virgin coconut oil to treat my hair, as if she had just been waiting for me, all these months, to ask for any kind of help.

You might call it trifling, but it was that moment when I realized I had never been, and will never be, alone. From the moment I was born, I had a mother who loved me no matter how I looked or how much I had kept her up waiting for me to come home from a late night out.

There is always a place where I will be loved not for anything that I have done, but simply for the mere fact that I was born to her, and that place is a mother's heart.

From then on, I would ask her to ring me up on the morning of a major exam just in case I wouldn't be awakened by my alarm clock, and I began to look forward to sitting down with her for mid-night snacks, talking to her about my worst fears and my fondest wishes.

In a few months, I'll be starting out in the real world. I'll be paying my own bills and saving up for my own future. But I know that no matter how much I think I can take care of myself, nothing can ever replace my mom's tender touch in rubbing Vicks Vaporub on me and tucking me into bed.

The ribbons she pinned on me may now be gone, but my mom deserves every accolade in the world. I may not have an award to pin on her, and there is no stage for her to come up to. But on this Mother's Day, I applaud her for welcoming me into her life and for loving me unconditionally, the way only a mother can.

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Psychic mother

By Pam Pastor

MY MOTHER SENT ME THIS TEXT message:

"Before you were born, napanagintapan kita na toddler ka. When you became a toddler, you looked exactly like you did in my dreams."

Then, after having dinner with her,

the first dinner in a long time, she sent this message:

"Forgot to tell you that I dreamt about you the other day. In my dream, you looked exactly like you did today, even your hair and the color of your skin."

My mother isn't psychic, or at least I'm not aware of it. Scratch that, maybe she is psychic when it comes to her kids.

Coming Out Letter on Mother's Day

By Danicar Mariano
2bUI Correspondent



IT ALWAYS amazes me when Pam picks up our babies when they are crying. In an instant, they stop and coo. Maybe it's the thought of breast milk, maybe it's the nine months they'd spent together, or maybe it's simply the magic that mommies have over babies (and daddies!). Happy Mother's Day, Pam! —from Yonton, Julia, Audrey and Lexi

MY MOM MUST HAVE BEEN SHOCKED. But, as I explain to my friends, my lesbianism is not caused by any failure on her part. In fact, she has taught me to appreciate women all the more—for their patience, compassion, resilience, diligence and wisdom. Not to forget their immense capacity to love.

All of these traits converge in a woman who is aging so beautifully, knowing when and how to laugh at herself and let that which does not matter truly slide. Do all people feel their mom to be the most saintly woman they know?

Even though my mom constantly voices out her concern about my choices, ever fearful I would get hurt or that I would regret them, I know she knows, deep inside, that it's her self-same idealism and generosity that drives me. And that is why I cannot help but live up to it. That is why I am fighting for the right to love,

the only way she taught me how—freely, bravely and in full faith.

I wrote and gave this letter to my mom two years ago when I came out to her as a gay and lesbian rights advocate. It happened on the eve of Mother's Day. I guess it happened to remind me to never underestimate a mother's capacity to love and accept her child, no matter how angry or confused they might be at first.

The week before the incident, I had been disguising the lesbian conference I was attending as "some human rights conference." With this information, my mom just gave a quizzical look. "What for?" she asked. "We're giving you your rights, aren't we? Charity begins at home, you know."

In my mind, telling them it was a "human rights" conference wasn't really lying as it wasn't really far from the truth. Gay and lesbians rights, after all, are human rights. And yet something in me wanted to be more self-revealing, and wondered what would happen if she

found out that I was really going to an anti-discrimination conference for lesbians, gays, and transgenders.

But because of her superhuman intuition, I discovered materials in connection with Lesbian Advocates Philippines in my possession. And unlike the time she first got a hint of my sexual orientation when I was 12, I was prepared for the confrontation this time.

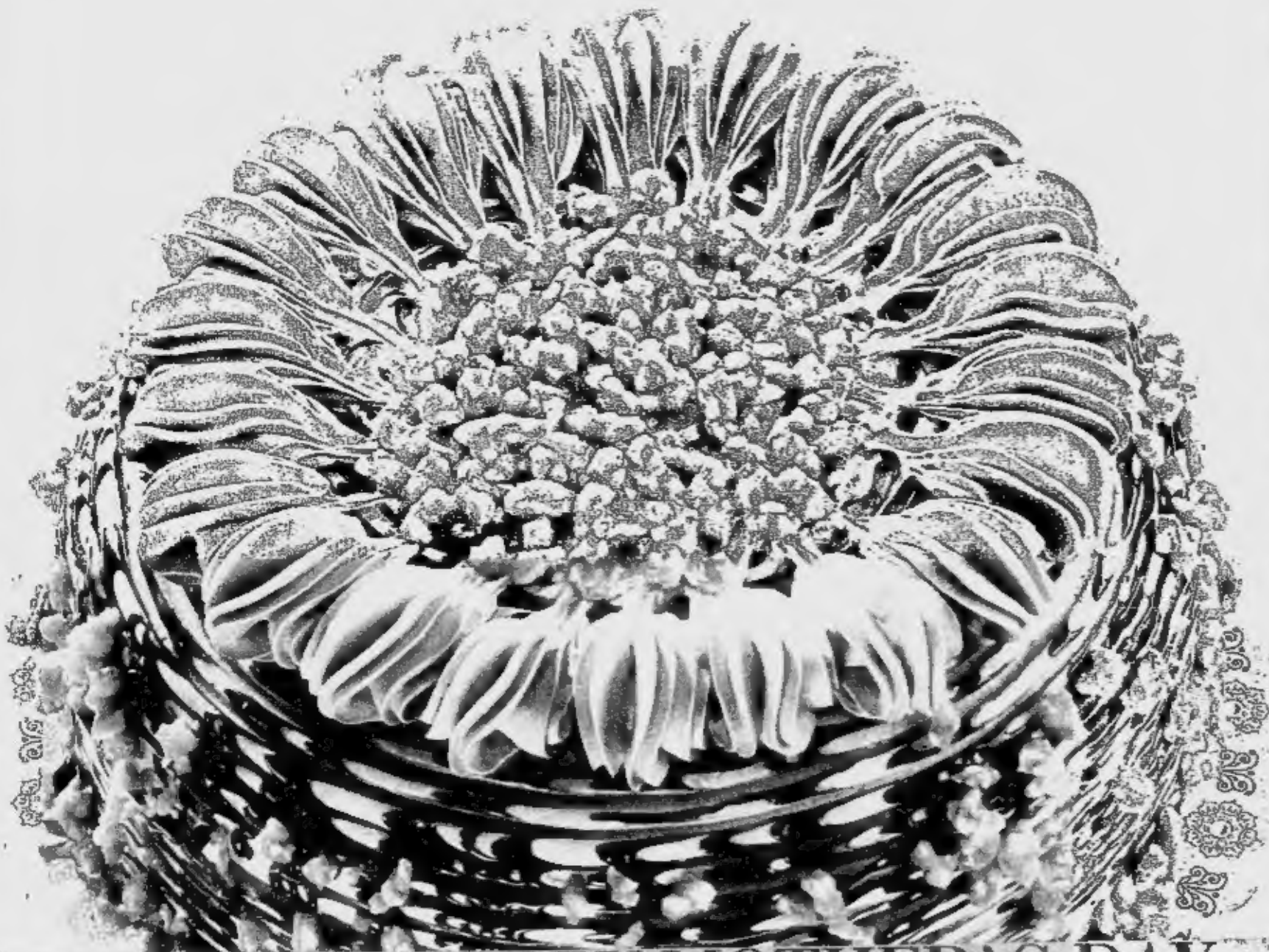
My mom showed me the material and me what it meant. "Sasali ka don?" My mom grew cold as it does in preparation for a procedure like an anesthesia before an operation. I moved automatically as if it couldn't deny anything.

"Mm" was all I could manage to mumble. "So parang proud ka pa doon!" she said.

ly. "Oo," I told her boldly. Then she started crying. "Pinaparusahan ako ng Diyos."

"Maaa, bakit naman po?"

Goldilocks.
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The Three Queens

By Pam Pastor

THREE WOMEN WERE present the day I was born. They didn't follow a star, they were already there, just like they always are.

I didn't know it then, but they had gifts for me.

My mother gave me my love for people, my passion for music, my flair for drama, my need to make sure no one around me is hungry, my insomnia, my disdain for ugly words, my bargain-hunting skills, my fixation on manners (I feel like reaching over when people fail to put their cutlery side by side on their plates after eating), my tendencies for great attachment and even greater affection, my ability to tell stories, my inability to put the phone down, my temper and my talkativeness.

My maternal grandmother gave me the desire to give until I have none and to buy something for everyone, my constant quest for peace, my sense of humor, my aversion to germs (I learned how to



A Love Like None

By Ana Patricia Barbacena-Sawit
2bUI Contributor

THE LONG LAZY SUMMER AFTERNOON beckoned me to start cleaning my cabinet and empty the drawers in my bureau. I guess it was timely that I found a yellowed envelope containing what I think is the most precious letter I have ever kept.

I would like to share it with you as a tribute to my mother who, in her life, was the word "love" personified. Although it was never sent (thank God!), the letter is a clear indication of how far a mother would go to give her children the best things in life.

April 3, 1993

"Dear Editor:

"It was probably Divine Providence that led me to read your April 1 column today, Saturday, about that mother who wished to sell her kidney. It is one bright idea I have been looking for but which has evaded me this past few months."

"Editor, I too want to sell one of my kidneys. If only I can function with one lung, I can sell it, too! I find this as the one final solution that can end my woes. I thought it would help bail me out of the rut I am in. At least this is better than selling my soul to Satan—my heart and my conscience say so."

"My husband lost his job at the US Embassy when the Americans left Clark Air Base last year. And since he is already 50 years old, he finds it terribly hard to find another job."

"I am sending my five children (ages ranging from 6 to 19) to school this June. This means that I have to raise about P30,000-P40,000 for the partial payment. (Three of them at St. Scholastica's College, the youngest at St. Paul's and the eldest at UST)."

"But that is not all. I also need a little something which I can use as equity for a motor vehicle loan I am taking from our Provident Fund to purchase an AUV to be used as a school bus. This calls for another P50,000. Do you think one of my kidneys can be sold for P80,000?"

"I am a healthy person. I don't drink or smoke. I have no heart ailment. Except for an appendectomy I have never been hospitalized for any ailment minor or major. I shall be very willing to undergo preliminary physical examinations even at my expense if only to be able to present evidence of my fitness."

"I know you must be saying by now, 'Life has really gotten that bad with this family.' I say Amen."

I will never forget the way my mom looked at me when she showed me the letter. She was asking for my opinion whether she should send it. Her voice sounded brave and determined, like a soldier gearing up for battle. But her eyes were saying a different thing. They were almost pleading that I say no, and for a moment, my mom looked like a helpless child. I had never seen my mother look at me like that."

I hugged her for a long time as she sobbed some more. Afterward, I gave her some space and didn't talk to her for the rest of the night. In the morning, I left her this letter.

From the heart

Dear Ma,
Please trust me. I know what I am doing with my life. It may take me a long time to decide and I may do it in ways different from what others do, but that is precisely what should make you believe that I am doing it right. Because I am doing it in my own honest-to-goodness way. No one else can do it for me and no one else can do it but me.
Yes, you have raised me well enough to know that. And you have loved me so much that I cannot be anything but proud of myself. You raised me with so much dignity that I cannot ask for anything but respect from others for who I am—your child.
Please do not say you are being punished. I

know it is difficult. It was difficult for me to accept, too, but now I am nothing but grateful and glad that this is what God made me. S/He made me uniquely who I am for a reason and I know that my only mission in life is to be that person—the person which S/He has both made me and that which S/He wants me to become. I do everything toward that end.
I wish you hadn't felt all the hurt that you endured, if there was any other way. But know that half of that hurt was not because of me, it was because of a society that condemns and refuses to understand. It doesn't have to be like that.
I still maintain that I am not doing anything wrong. Being who I am and loving who I choose isn't wrong. And this is the basic freedom that I am fighting for. That people do not get kicked out of school or get fired from their jobs just because they are who they are. I am fighting for so many others to have choices—choices that will let them lead happier lives.
There is so much injustice done against les-

bians throughout history, only because they choose to live and love differently. Many were burned at the stake during witch hunts. In the Philippines, a lot of them are beaten up. Some fathers even have their tomboy daughters raped to "cure" them. This is what I am fighting against.

This and the fact that you shouldn't have gone through all that you have gone through simply because of your fear of what society would do against me or because of the wrong idea that society gives that lesbianism is bad.

True, Ma, charity begins at home. Trust me, I am your child. I am doing this with open eyes. This is who I am and the only choice I have is to choose it with dignity.

Hindi lalakas ang loob ko na gawin 'to laban sa mga kinalakihan kong paniniwala kung hindi talaga matatag ang paninindigan ko na sigurado ako sa ginagawa ko. Inisip ko sya ng matagal—buong buhay ko, in fact. [I wouldn't be this brave to go against the belief system I grew up

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And now that I see my choices very clearly, I am not about to throw my life away. I wouldn't defend this as strongly as I am defending it right now if I wasn't really serious. And, believe me, if I have to work twice as hard to prove to you that I am serious about this, I will.

Even if you've raised us in comfort and luxury, I'm willing to go through hardship. I'm not afraid to suffer or encounter opposition. You see, I've inherited your bravery. I don't let anyone think or speak or live for me. The only way I see living is to live it proudly, despite all odds. I hope you, of all people, should understand because that, precisely, is your legacy to me. For that, Ma, I am nothing but grateful.

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My paternal grandmother gifted me with my zeal for words, my fascination with food, my love affair with books, my need for independence, my dependence on manicures and pedicures, my strength, my indecisiveness, my love for justice and fair play.

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My dad passed away July 23, 1996, due to complications from a heart disease. The pain of losing him and the plethora of regrets is another story in itself. Something that would merit a different letter and tribute to a man whose faith in the Lord never waned up to the end.

After being diagnosed with leukemia in Jan. 2, 1998, my mother passed away, too, exactly one year to the day she was diagnosed. My sisters and I were devastated. It was like someone had taken the wind out of our systems. But we couldn't grieve. We had to be strong for each other.

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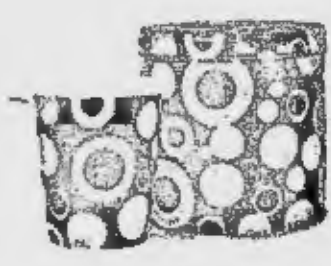
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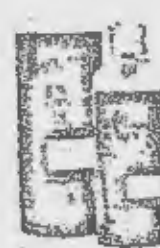
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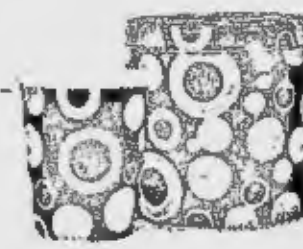
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To be your Confessions

off at a financially minded runaway

By Zara Q.
2bU! Contributor

I HAVE LOTS OF REASONS TO RUN AWAY from home, and my mother is on top of the list.

She always gets on my nerves, probably much like the way I get on hers. So, it's no surprise that we butt heads more often than not. When I was a kid, a fight between my mother and me usually meant she'd be blowing off an infinite amount of steam, and I'd be in a corner trying very hard not to cry.

But as I grew up, the one-sided scolding sessions gradually turned into two-way shouting matches, complete with angry waterworks and all that melodrama. She could be pretty unreasonable and get mad over the most trivial things, and I'd start to feel the need to defend myself. I'm not proud of it, but there were times when I simply couldn't take it anymore.

After every fight, I would wonder what I'd done or didn't do for her to treat me this way. I'm smart, talented, well-liked and well-rounded. I have no vices, nor have I done anything to make her ashamed of me. I excel in practically anything and everything I do. Modesty aside, most parents would be contented to have a kid like me.

But not my mother. She's never quite satisfied. She always manages to find something to scold me for, even though I've done so many things she claims she's proud of. And whenever that happens, she never fails to make me feel like I'm not doing enough.

Oftentimes, the stress at home gets so bad that I feel like I'm nothing but a big burden to her, financially and emotionally. Don't get me wrong. I try my hardest not to be. But whenever she's in a bad mood, she goes on and on about how much she's sacrificed for me, and she makes sure I never forget it.

She may be right, but the thing is, I'm being reminded about it much too often that sometimes I'm literally beginning to wish I'd never been born.

It doesn't take much to please her, but it doesn't take much to disappoint her, either. It gets to a point that I just don't know what to do anymore. This is when the idea of

Running away will just prove I'm not the model daughter I've always prided myself to be

running away becomes the sanest option for me.

I think it'd be easier for her if I just left. Less expenses, less tension, therefore less headaches. But something always stops me from packing my bags. My stubborn pride prefers to think it's more of a financial reason than anything else. I have no money, no job and no place to go to (well, none where I can't be tracked down sooner or later, anyway).

But my heart knows what the real reason is, and it's only during this one special day every year that I overcome my pride and accept that reason for what it is.

Despite the frequent emotional outbursts, I know that my mother loves me with her whole heart. All those times she had called me selfish and I had believed her to be totally wrong. I realize now that she's been right all along. If I go ahead with my plan, I'll be running away not from my mother, but from my own feelings of guilt, from the problems I'm supposed to face head on. Running away will just prove that I'm not the model daughter I've always prided myself to be.

My mother never means to hurt me or make me feel bad about myself. This special occasion reminds me that she just wants me to be everything I can be, because she believes in me. She's given up so much, yet I've given her so little in return. The least I can do is to prove to her, to myself and to everyone else that I'm worth all the trouble she's gone through in raising me.

Sure, we may fight and say hurtful words to each other, but I know we'll eventually work things out. After all, we always do.

I still have lots of reasons to run away, and I can probably think of more. But I have just one reason not to do so, and in the end, it's always enough to make me stay.

I love you, too, Ma, with my whole heart. Happy Mother's Day.

T.G.I.F.

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